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AS HE TURNED, A CRY OF ANGUISH RANG OUT; "GUY, GUY, DO YOU NOT KNOW ME!"

AN UNFORTUNATE RESEMBLANCE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

It was evening in India. The blazing, brazen sun was sinking slowly to rest, in a cloudless sky, while the brilliant, silver moon was riding up on her starry throne to lighten the gloom of the coming hours—those hours of fresh, delicious coolness, so precious to the sun-baked, semi-fried dwellers in that sultry clime.

A cool, sweet breeze was springing up, swaying the oleander flowers, and other gorgeous blooms that clung and climbed around the trellis-work of Mrs. Derwent's pretty bungalow.

That lady sat in the verandah attired in the thinnest of black dresses, swaying a huge palm-leaf slowly to and fro, and staring steadily at nothing, with her great black eyes.

She was a comely woman of about eight-and-thirty, tall—finely made, with a clear skin, abundant brown hair, regular features, and the afore-mentioned big black eyes.

Comely, undoubtedly, and yet hardly pleasant to look at sometimes. For instance, when there was that dark shadow lowering over her face, as there was now, dimming the brightness of the luminous eyes, filling them with sinister and gloomy lights, and puckering the smooth brow into furrows and wrinkles until it looked like that of an old, old crone.

No, expression made a world of difference in Mrs. Derwent's visage, and when she was alone her thoughts were written pretty plainly on her features, though kept well in subjection before the public.

The public was not present, and her gloomy scowl was but the reflection of her gloomy thoughts. She made no effort to hide it, finding, perhaps, a relief in dropping the perpetual mask of smiles and cheerful expressions with which she habitually deceived the world at large, and

deluded it into the belief that she was a happy and contented woman.

That she certainly was not, and indeed had not been for many a long year, not since she passed the age of "sweet seventeen," for at that early time she had been flitted by a handsome and unscrupulous young cornet in a cavalry regiment, who engaged himself to handsome Betty Clements for the space of a few months, and then coolly gave her the go-by, when a middle-aged fair one, with five thousand a year, and an unlimited amount of diamonds threw him the handkerchief, and took him unto herself as a spouse.

Betty was wild with rage, mortified pride, and grief. Hers was not a good nature, and the disappointment brought out all the worst points of her character. She angled for the colonel of her faithless lover's regiment, succeeded in inducing him to propose, and became his wife in less than three months after Courtney Harcourt's marriage!

Then she set to work to ruin the man who had

betrayed her affection. While appearing to have forgotten the past, she kept her base end steadily in view; encouraged his marked attentions, thereby making his middle-aged, sober wife half mad with jealousy, and utterly wretched; threw older men of bad reputation in his way, fostered and pandered to his fatal love of gaming, and in five years managed to ruin him, horse, foot, and dragon, and got him dismissed the service in disgrace, having been detected cheating at cards, when his last sovereign was staked on the green, and loss meant utter and complete ruin to him.

This accomplished, and Harcourt exiled from all decent society, she gave herself up to dissipation of every kind. Nightly she went to theatres, balls, concerts, dinners; daily to "at homes," croquet parties, *fêtes*, picnics, anything and everything.

She was never happy at home, and her indulgent old husband let her do just as she pleased, spend no end of money, entertain no end of folk, and flirt in the most barefaced fashion.

He was infatuated, and thought all she did was right. Other people were of a slightly different opinion, and wagged their heads and their tongues at the same time over the vagaries and follies perpetrated by Colonel Derwent's gay and handsome young wife.

The fact of her having a little child—a little fair-haired, blue-eyed girl—made no difference whatever to her. She left the child to the care of her nurse, looking upon her as a bit of an encumbrance and a nuisance, and went on her way—not exactly rejoicing, but doing her best to make time pass gaily and enjoy herself.

She was delighted when the regiment was ordered to India. Here were "fresh woods and pastures new."

She was not known there, looked young, and if Nella was kept well in the background might knock eight years off her age and pass for four-and-twenty, which she did very successfully.

Ladies—pretty ones, be it understood—being at a premium, she received plenty of that adulation so dear to her shallow nature, and was fêted, and followed, and admired to her heart's content, and had no end of a good time of it, always surrounded by a circle of admirers; always the centre of attraction at the stations where they were quartered; always in request at dances, polo matches, picnics, elephant riding, each gallant officer at a "small game" hunt striving to get her to ride in his howdah; always having three or four good horses at her disposal whenever she wished to mount them, and receiving no end of flowers, gloves, cases of perfume, and caskets of bonbons.

The fast, free, reckless, restless Anglo Indian life suited her exactly; she revelled in it.

The six years spent in that Eastern clime were the happiest of her life, despite the fact that her daughter was growing inconveniently tall, and would soon have to be produced as a marriageable young lady.

She never looked ahead, only enjoying the present, and in the midst of this rapid, whirling, thoughtless life came the crash, the finish of which she in her recklessness had never dreamt.

Colonel Derwent rode out one morning to early parade on his great dapple-grey charger, looking the picture of health, and two hours later he was brought back dead. His horse had stumbled and thrown him, rolling on him, crushing him out of all semblance to anything human.

That his widow was shocked at his terribly sudden end no one could deny; that she felt any poignant grief at his loss is doubtful. She had never loved him, only looked on him as a means whereby she could gain her ends.

She was still good-looking, and might reasonably hope for an offer of marriage after the term of her mourning expired; only in the meantime there were some hard and uncomfortable realities to be faced; and so it was no wonder that a black scowl brooded over her brow as she sat in the verandah of her bungalow that summer evening, staring at nothing.

A hundred a year is not much for a woman to keep herself and a daughter on, and yet that was all Mrs. Derwent could hope to have, all the Colonel had been able to leave her.

Her follies and extravagances had drained his

resources. They had lived up to his income, and, indeed, rather overstepped it, and now she had come down with a bang from several hundreds to one.

Only three months a widow, and it seemed like years to her! Of course she could not participate in any of the gaieties going on; equally, of course, she could not plunge as she would have wished to do, and have had relays of costly and becoming black dresses wherewith to fascinate possible admirers.

No; stern facts put that out of the question. A want of £ a d. ruffled her sadly, and fretted her greatly.

"What am I to do!" she muttered, for the hundredth time since the grave had closed over her loving and long-suffering husband, letting fall the palm leaf and twisting her slim, taper fingers one within the other. "How shall I get on? And with Nella, too, such a drag on me, with her fanciful ways and delicate health. I shall never weather the storm! What shall I do!"

"Wait and hope for the best," said a masculine voice beside her; and turning with a start, she found Eardly Walaba, one of the regimental doctors, and an ardent admirer of hers, at her side.

"There is no best for me," she returned, with an affected sigh, resuming instantly the mask of artificial smiles and grimaces with which she favoured the public.

"Don't say that," he returned, pressing the hand he had possessed himself of slightly. "There are bright days in store for you, I am sure."

"I fear not, my happiness has departed."

"It may return," with a significant look full into her eyes; "who knows!"

"Who, indeed," she echoed, thinking at any rate that his would not, and could not, be the hand to bring it to her, seeing that he had nothing—not a stiver, save his pay, and moreover was heavily burdened with debt.

"You are dependent now. You should cheer up; your pulse is going at no end of a rate," pressing her wrist lovingly.

"Oh, I am quite well," she answered, a touch of impatience in her manner, for she did not quite like Walaba. There was a something about him that inspired her with fear, a nameless dread. Perhaps this was caused by his dark, piercing eyes, that seemed to look her through and through, and see all her pettiness and littleness, all the shortcomings of her faulty nature, or by the sardonic cast of his countenance, and the queer trick his long, hooked nose had of coming down over his big, black moustache when he laughed, showed all his great white, wolf-like teeth. At any rate, whatever it was, she did not like him, and secretly feared him, though she was too clever to show it, or her dislike, as she thought his affection for her might some day be turned to account, and made use of. So she smothered her repugnance, and smiled away harder than ever to hide her momentary annoyance.

"You may be now, but if you go on fretting in this fashion you will make yourself seriously ill before long," he persisted, "break down altogether."

"I hardly think so," she returned, with a soft, upward glance of the big, black eyes. "I am made of sterner stuff than that. But, you know," she went on, quickly, "that I have had an immense deal to go through!"

"Of course," he agreed at once.

An immense amount to suffer, not only Charlie's death, and the subsequent loss of means and position, but Nella's whims and oddities since our trouble, have been more marked, more distressing. I hardly know what to do with her sometimes, she is so queer, out of her behaviour."

"I am deeply grieved to hear you say so," he replied, earnestly.

"It is wretched," she declared, despondently. "I am at my wits' end to know how to manage her, and keep her within bounds. Now, as a medical man," she continued, lifting her eyes, and looking at him steadily, "tell me, do you

think I have anything to fear with regard to her reason?"

"You wish me to answer without reserve! Candidly!"

"Most certainly I do."

"Then—you have the gravest reasons for fear—"

"You think she will go mad!" she exclaimed, horror in her tone, on her face.

"I think it is very probable she may."

"Is there nothing that would prevent it—no treatment, no medicine?"

"Treatment will do a good deal towards preventing, or at any rate postponing, the calamity. She must be kept very quiet—no excitement, no disappointment. Avoid crossing her wishes as far as it is possible; give way whenever you can. Let her have the best of everything; no wine, beer, or spirits of course, as they would increase her disorder, but nourishing soups and gravies, plenty of exercise, and regular hours. This will do a great deal towards setting her straight."

"Perhaps so, and yet think, with my means, and you know, dear friend, how miserably slender they are, how little I can do."

"True, and yet you must make a vigorous effort for your sake and hers."

"You think," she said, slowly and reflectively, "that poverty and trouble might hasten on the undesired end?"

"Most certainly I do."

"I don't see my way!" exclaimed Mrs. Derwent, wringing her hands, and for once letting the mask drop. "I don't see how I can help our poverty, or make things smooth for her."

"You must hope for the best, and—" began the doctor, when a rustle of female attire at his side made him look round, and there stood Nella Derwent.

"A letter for you, mother, from England!" she said, calmly, holding out the missive.

"From England! It must be from Paul," and, jumping up with the agility of a girl, Mrs. Derwent took it, and began to devour its contents; while Nella, with a cool nod to the doctor, leant over the balcony, tearing an slender blossom to shreds.

"Thank Heaven, we are saved!" exclaimed her mother a few minutes later, in a most excited manner.

"Saved! What do you mean!" queried Nella.

"Paul, my dear, dear brother, offers us a home—throws his house open to us!"

"Indeed! That is kind," said the younger woman, quietly, without showing a shade of anxiety or ought else to disturb the placidity of her manner.

"Kind! It is more than kind; it is princely. We are to consider it as much ours as it is his and Nesta's. Think of that, child; think what that means. Wealth, ease, luxury! A splendid house to live in, a retinue of servants to attend on us, carriages to drive in, horses to ride, the best county people to mix with, gaily, amusement, everything we can possibly desire!"

"We cannot possibly desire 'gaiety and amusement' so soon after poor father's death," responded Nella, coldly, eyeing her mother in a queer, ferocious way.

"Of course not at present, my dear, but after awhile. We cannot mourn for ever; and I am the last person in the world to mope and fret if I can possibly help it."

"I quite believe that," rejoined her daughter, dryly.

"Is it not good news, doctor!" she continued, turning to him in her unbounded delight.

"Yes, I suppose it is, for you," he answered, gloomily.

"You don't congratulate me; you don't seem glad!" she cried in amazement.

"How can I be glad!" he asked in low tones, meant only for her ears.

"What do you mean?"

"It will necessitate your leaving India."

"Well!" her intense excitement made her blind to his meaning.

"Well!" he repeated, something like anger at her wilful obtuseness glowing in his sombre eyes. "That robs me of your society."

"Oat!"

That was all she said, and that was all he said. He could not speak more plainly to a widow of three months standing, especially when her daughter was present, though he would have wished to have told her straight out how much he loved her, how greatly he longed to make her his wife, how ardently he looked forward to the time when he might plead his cause and win her consent; but at present *les convenances* had to be respected, the usages of polite society observed, and so he gloomily held his peace, saying not a word, and saw her aboard the vessel that was to take her to England a week later, and bade her adieu without committing himself to more than saying that he hoped the rumour he had heard that his regiment was soon to be ordered to Europe might prove to be correct—a hope which she was politic and prudent enough to echo so heartily that it sent him ashore in quite jubilant spirits, and left a pleasant impression of her sentiments towards him on his mind.

CHAPTER II.

SKELLYN ROYAL, Paul Hewitt's place, was a fine old house of the Stuart period. The gray stone walls were six feet thick, the windows long and narrow (except in some of the living-rooms, where modern ornaments had taken the place of the ancient ones), the towers high, the turrets many, the interior a labyrinth of passages, halls, and chambers, with *corps de logis* at every angle; alcoves in the bedrooms, with, in many cases, *ruelles* behind them, and diminutive doors opening on concealed staircases; and one or two "priest holes" behind the principal chimney-pieces, secret passages leading to dungeons, and *oubliettes*.

Tapestry still hung in the unused suites of apartments, and decorated huge four-post beds, which had a further garnishing of mighty ostrich plumes, and matched the black, carved oak furniture, queer mirrors, and dim, faded portraits of dead and bygone lovely dames and handsome cavaliers.

A fine place undoubtedly, and yet these old, unused rooms were an indescribably sinister aspect, a character of evil, especially some half-dimmed large, dreary ones in the east wing of the ground floor, once said to have been occupied by the unhappy Mary of Scots shortly before her imprisonment, in the principal, largest, and most gruesome of which hung a portrait of that ill-fated queen, gazing in its hard freshness on the different objects in the ill-omened chamber.

All was different in the west wing, which was the part inhabited by Mr. Hewitt and his only child.

Modern inventions and improvements had been lavishly introduced; all that money could do to make the spacious rooms cheerful and bright had been done, and the result was pleasing.

Rich carpets covered the polished floors, elegant furniture gave a modern, everyday appearance, and numerous knick-knacks made them homelike and comfortable.

The enlarged windows let in plenty of light, banishing the dark shadows, and soft, thick curtains gave a cosy look to the beautifully-painted walls, while the shoulder-high oaken wainscots easily passed muster for fashionable daddies; so altogether no one could complain of want of comfort or modernness in the west wing.

Certainly neither Paul Hewitt nor his daughter Nesta thought of doing so that bright June morning as they sat in the splendid dining-room breakfasting, tiring with pigeon pie, *foie gras*, toast, and coffee, and chatting gaily and affectionately.

"I only hope their coming will make no difference to you, my love," Mr. Hewitt was saying.

"Now, daddy dear, what difference can it make in the way you mean?"

"Well, one never knows. Women don't always get on smoothly together when associated in a domestic way."

"Oh, we shall," she declared, confidently. "I am too young to manage the housekeeping properly at present; aunt will do it much better."

"I hope so."

"I am sure of it."

"Then there is your cousin Nella. She is only a few years older than you."

"That is all the better. We shall be great companions and friends. Only wait and see."

"I hope so," he said again, more dubiously.

"Why are you so doubtful about it, dad?" she inquired, looking at him, a shade of anxiety in her clear brown eyes.

"She may be jealous of you."

"Jealous. What of, pray?"

"You are an heiress, Nesta!"

"That will make no difference."

"It may. Women are but 'kittle cattle.' She has nothing to look forward to, not a single penny."

"How dreadful. Poor thing!"

"Yes, it is very hard on her, especially as she has, I fancy, been brought up extravagantly; and, besides, is far from strong in health. The hundred a year Charles left Betty is only drawn from an 'Officer's Widow's Fund,' and dies with her, so the girl's prospects are nil."

"You must alter her prospects, dad."

"How, my love?"

"Out of all you have, you can spare her some. Two or three hundred a year will not be missed, and provide well for her future wants and necessities."

"That is a good thought, Nessy, and a generous one, as it will come out of your inheritance."

"I shall never miss it," she replied, twining her arms round his neck, and kissing him fondly.

"Hardly," he returned, smiling at her; "and it will keep her from knowing what want is."

"Of course, three hundred a year is a nice little income for a single woman, and I suppose if she is delicate she won't marry."

"One never knows. I hear she is very pretty, like you, Nesta."

"Thanks for the comp., dad," with another kiss.

"She may get a good offer."

"I hope she will."

"And what do you hope for yourself, child?" with a sudden quick and inquiring glance full into her eyes, that sent the hot blood surging up to her white forehead in a crimson wave.

"I want to stay with you," she whispered, burying her face in his sleeve.

"Not always, dearie," he said gently, stroking the glossy, chestnut braids. "There is one to whom, if you gave your heart, your old father would not object; for he is honest, manly, and true." And as he spoke he looked out, and saw coming up the avenue towards the house the very man who was in his thoughts—Guy Chalmers.

Now, Guy Chalmers was the only child and heir of his old college friend and chum—Mortimer Chalmers—whose estate joined his, and nothing would please the two friends more than that the two estates should become one by the marriage of their children, when Nesta should reach a suitable age, for as yet she was only sixteen—too young, they both thought, for matrimonial cares and perplexities by at least a couple of years.

Guy was ten summers her senior, and undeniably in love with the girl he had carried on his stalwart shoulders when a baby; played with later on, and adored at the present time, with all the depth and fervour of his honest heart, whose greatest hope was that some day, some bright, beautiful happy day, he might claim her as his own—his very own—have the right to call her by the endearing title of "wife."

"Yonder comes Guy," observed Mr. Hewitt, giving his daughter's still rosy cheek a knowing little pat, which covered it and its fellow with blushes again. "He doesn't want to see me I am sure, so I'll make myself scarce," and suiting the action to the word he went off to his sanctum, and left Nesta to meet her lover alone.

It was not long before Chalmers's tall figure stepped in through the long French windows, and the girl's fairy fingers were clasped in a warm grasp.

"Once you used to kiss me when I came," he remarked, by way of an opening.

"That was when I was a little girl," she returned, promptly, not, however, withdrawing her hands from his clasp.

"Oh, I suppose you consider yourself a grown-up young lady now?"

"Certainly I do," drawing her light, graceful figure up to its full height, not succeeding, though, in reaching his shoulder, despite all her efforts.

"And yet I hear some talk of your going to school."

"Yes," with a wry face. "Dad thinks I want finishing, and that I ought to go to Paris for a year. Isn't it cruel of him even to hint at it?"

"Awfully cruel," agreed Guy. "He won't carry out his plan."

"Perhaps not, if left alone."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—Aunt Betty."

"Well?"

"She is fearfully fashionable."

"Oh!"

"And of course will say that I am a rustic, and then the thing is done. Dad will send me away."

"Just so. Unless we can think of a plan to checkmate Aunt Betty."

"I wish we could."

"We must try. We shall think better out-of-doors. Run and get your hat; it is a shame to be in such a glorious morning, and we must make the most of our time if you are going into banishment abroad."

And she flew off like a butterfly, returning in an incredibly short space of time with a big, white hat on, calculated to shade her effectually from the sun's scorching and tanning rays.

"Now where shall we go?" he asked, as they stepped out into the warmth, glow, and brilliance of the June day.

"Where you like," she answered, smilingly, as she patted the great tawny head of a mastiff who was fawning on her, and pushing his huge muzzle into her hand.

"Haven't you a choice?"

"No, I don't mind in the least where we go, so long as—"

"So long as," he interrupted, teasingly; "you are with me. Of course that is understood. Though I like to hear you say so."

"Oh, you puppy; your conceits are becoming unbearable."

"Well, try and take me down a peg."

"Certainly not. I don't mean to waste my time in such a useless way."

"You mean by that—"

"That your opinion of yourself is so excellent that it would be a task for Hercules, and Hercules alone, to alter it, and disabuse your mind of the idea that you are perfection itself."

"Thanks. You are hitting hard this morning, little woman."

"Not hard enough to hurt you."

"How do you know?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then I am not. Don't you know—"

"No, I don't; how can I tell you tell me?" she queried, with a sharp quickness of manner which was assumed to hide the embarrassment she felt at a nameless something in his manner, a sort of tenderness which she had never noticed before, and which filled her with mingled delight and fear—delight at the thought that he might actually, really love her, fear that he would declare it; for she was so young and childish that she absolutely feared to hear the man at her side declare his love.

"Well, I am going to tell you," he went on, calmly; "one harsh word from you would hurt me more than all anyone else in the world could say, so I think you ought to be careful."

"I should be if I really thought that the case."

"Do think it."

"I am afraid I can't."

"Why not?"

"It is too preposterous."

"Nesta!"

"Yes," looking up at him innocently.

"You don't mean what you say."

"Don't I?"

"No, you can't," bending down and gazing into the eyes that would not meet his own fully and fairly.

"Indeed I do."

"Say that again, looking at me straight in the eyes like friends."

"No, I will not."

"Of course not. You would be afraid to."

"Why, pray!"

"Afraid of telling a deliberate and unmitigated fib."

"Sir, do you think me capable of telling stories?"

"Not as a rule. In the present case I think you are a grave prevaricator of the truth."

"Well, perhaps I am," she admitted, and then they both laughed, joyous, ringing peals, that told how happy and lighthearted they were.

"I hope you are."

"Do you? Why?"

"Because I want you to believe all I tell you."

"Oh!" with a deep blush and nervous movement of the head.

"I want you to be very tender, and very kind, and very merciful to me."

"Modest man!" she managed to murmur, despite her extreme confusion.

"I am not that; far from it, and I am going to be the most presumptuous man in the world."

"Oh, don't be, please!" she implored, as he threw his arms round her, and drew her towards him.

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Every-one-can see-her," she stammered.

"There is no one. Still, to please you, I'll wait till we reach the summit of the hill, and the shelter of the trees, contenting myself with this," drawing her hand through his arm, and giving it, as he did so, a gentle squeeze.

After this performance they went on in silence, enjoying the brilliance of the summer day.

"Out on the cliffs and the grassy downs,
Shadowy woodland and rugged glen,
Nature can woo with a winning tongue,
Freshness and beauty she eye can show."

And she certainly could. Everything looked lovely, as they walked on towards Sellyn summit, the wild beauty of which was famed throughout the length and breadth of the county. The path, little more than a sheep-walk, led up through a wilderness of ferns and heath, with here and there a verdant strip of meadow-like grass, contrasting vividly with the moorland beyond, from which rushed down the rapid river, finding its crooked way over ruddy rocks and round sharp corners, bending and winding, and twisting and turning, as it sparkled along in the June sunrays.

Away in the distance were green hills, their verdant sides dotted by snowy sheep, with here and there a red-roofed cottage, glowing a spot of bright colour amid the verdure, and below stretched away the ripening corn-fields, the bearded barley, and graceful swaying oats, and tracks of lush mead, where the browsing cattle stood knee-deep, lazily enjoying a good feed and the cheery warmth.

The summit of Sellyn Head was eight hundred feet above the sea level, and the winter winds were wont to sweep across it with terrible ferocity, almost incredible in summer-time.

"How lovely the view is to-day!" remarked Nesta, by way of an opening, when they stood on the summit arm-in-arm, studying the rich, grain-laden land that stretched away mile upon mile at the foot of the hill.

"Yes. But it is always splendid," agreed Guy, "and one I never tire of studying."

"Nor I."

"Then we are of the same mind on one point," he said, letting her hand drop, and drawing her down to sit beside him on a great flat stone, polished and smooth as marble.

"Yes," she assented, yielding to the pressure of his arm, and leaning slightly against him.

"I wish we were of one mind in everything," he said, just a trifle moodily.

"Do you?"

"Certainly I do."

"How do you know we are not?"

"I don't know—I want to. People generally differ about something or other."

"Naturally. How tame the world would be if there were no quarrels, no disagreements!"

"Oh! is that your real opinion?" with a somewhat disappointed look at her.

"Yes, my real and true opinion."

"I am sorry to hear it, Nesta. I did not think you were of a quarrelsome temperament," he announced, gravely.

"Neither am I, Guy!" she hastened to assure him. "Only don't you see," with a little, soft upward glance, that set his pulses throbbing at no end of a rate, "if there were no quarrels there would be no makings up, and they are always nice. People are such good friends after they have had a tiff, and then kissed and made it up all right."

"I see," with a reassured smile.

"Weren't you an old goose not to think of that!" giving his stalwart shoulder a pat.

"Don't call me a goose," imprisoning the fingers that had dealt the blow.

"Why not?"

"Because I shall kiss you if you do."

"Then I won't!" she murmured, as the crimson tide crept up even to the fair brow which the removal of her great hat left bare for the summer wind to play on, and lift the soft masses of chestnut hair.

"Wouldn't you like me to kiss you?" he asked, bending his head till his moustache mingled with the chestnut curls.

"Wouldn't you?" he repeated, as she maintained a bashful silence, putting his hand under the dimpled chin, and turning up her face till he looked straight into the reluctant eyes.

"It would not be right," she murmured at last, when thus brought to bay.

"Not even if you were my wife!" he asked in low, wooing tones.

"Yes—then," she managed to answer.

"And will you be that? Will you give me the right to kiss you as often as I please? and it won't be seldom, Nessy, if I please myself."

"Answer, darling!" he urged, stroking the glossy head, for her face was now hidden against his breast. "Don't you care for me? Have I been mistaken in thinking your affection mine, and that we might give our parents the happiness they desire, by becoming man and wife. Don't you love me? Say, sweetheart!"

"Yes, Guy, I love you!" she whispered, in smothered tones.

"And will be my wife!"

"Yes."

And then, and not till then, when she had promised to become his bride, he lifted the drooping head, and kissed the fresh, sweet lips, that were now all his own.

CHAPTER III.

"I like to see him every day,
I like to feel his near;
I'm restless when he goes away,
And nervous when he's here.
Yet proud and happy by his side,
A little frightened too.
How odd if I become his bride!
I wish I knew, I wish I knew."

Sang Nesta a week later, as she settled great clusters of crimson and yellow roses in vases, bowls, and jars, and every available thing for flower-holding which she could find in the drawing-room at Sellyn Royal.

"So you're restless, are you, when I'm not here, madam," laughed Guy, who had come in noiselessly through the window, and stood beside her.

"Well, we'll alter that soon; you shall have me near you always."

"Shabby fellow to listen in that secret way," cried his *fiancée*, throwing down the roses, and stretching up on tiptoe to kiss him, not once, but a dozen times—caresses which he returned with interest.

"I wasn't listening."

"What a fib!"

"Take care, madam, don't insult your lord and master."

"Not my L and M yet, sir."

"Soon will be, though. When you shout out the state of your feelings at the top of your voice what can anyone passing by do but hear!"

"Stop his or her ears."

"Rubbish. You are a small goose."

"And you are a big one."

"You won't dare to say such things to me when the knot is tied."

"Perhaps not. When it is."

"What do you mean, darling?" he asked quickly, seeing the shade that fell across her bright face.

"I think, Guy, that we won't be married this year."

"Not! Why?"

"Dad thinks I am too young for matrimony."

"We must make him think differently."

"If we can."

"You seem doubtful."

"I am very. He says two years ought to elapse before we arrange matters even."

"How ridiculous! We must talk him over."

"Then there is aunt."

"What about her?"

"She will be against us, I am sure."

"What makes you think that?"

"I don't know. I can't tell, only I have a kind of premonition that she will not be friendly to our cause."

"I wish she were not coming here."

"So do I now."

"Tell your father so, and let him make other arrangements for her and her daughter."

"It is too late."

"Too late!"

"Yes. They are to arrive here to-day."

"By Jupiter, are they though! I did not know you expected them so soon!"

"Neither did we. Only aunt set sail almost immediately after she received dad's letter. They had a quick passage, and she is coming straight from board ship here."

"Confound it. I wish she was at Nova Scotia, or any other out of the way place."

His pale little betrothed did not echo this unkind wish, only stood nervously pulling the petals of a rose to pieces with fingers that trembled somewhat.

"I have it, Nesta!" cried her lover, suddenly and joyously; "we will go to the governor now, this minute, before Mrs. Derwent has a chance of saying anything against our plans, and get his final consent to our wedding taking place this autumn," and away they ran like a pair of children, and sought Mr. Hewitt in his study.

At first he was obdurate, and would not hear of the wedding taking place that year; but after awhile he began to thaw a little under the fire of their united supplications, and had almost, not quite, given his consent to their nuptials being fixed for September, when a rumbling was heard on the gravel path without, and a heavily-laden fly passed the window, and drew up at the hall door.

"Your aunt," he said, quickly; "we must go and meet her, bid her welcome," and he went out hurriedly, followed by Guy and Nesta.

Alas! for the poor young lovers. How different would have been their fate had Mrs. Derwent's arrival been delayed a few minutes.

That lady was just descending from the vehicle as they reached the door, in mourning from head to foot, and with a sad and woe-begone expression on her handsome face, to impress her brother with the grief and misery she was enduring.

"My dear Betty!" he exclaimed, warmly, grasping her outstretched, faintly-gloved hands. "Welcome to my home, welcome a thousand times!"

"Thanks, thanks," she muttered, releasing one hand from his grasp to apply a deeply black-bordered handkerchief to her eyes, guiltless of a single tear. "Your—kindness—and goodness—overwhelm me—overcome me—returning as I do to my native land—in such—sorrow—and tribulation."

"We must try and soften your sorrow," he said, gently. "And this is Nella!" as Miss Derwent stepped quietly and calmly out of the fly, as though she was on a shopping expedition,

not a trace of grief or emotion of any kind visible on her placid countenance.

"Yes, I am Nella," she announced, with the utmost coolness. "Do you think you'd have known me, uncle, if we'd met in the street by accident?"

"I hardly know," he said, hesitatingly, as he looked at her, somewhat taken aback at this address. "You were a very little girl when I saw you last."

"Yes, and I am getting on for an old girl now, am I not?" with one of her queer, half-spiteful glances at her mother, who flushed and fidgetted, and looked horribly annoyed, and put off colour. "Hardly," returned Mr. Hewitt, with a laugh. "You are not much Nesta's senior. By the way, here she is! You cousins will be great friends, I hope."

"I am sure we shall," said Nesta, cordially, who after embracing her aunt, did the same by her cousin, who stared hard at her, exclaiming,—

"Who is it you're like? Someone I've seen and I can't think who it is."

"Yourself," said her uncle, quickly, looking at the two girls in surprise. "You resemble each other in a remarkable manner. Don't they?" appealing to Guy and Betty, who assented at once.

And so they did at first sight, being just about the same height and build, with chestnut hair, fair skins, and brown eyes, only Nesta was incomparably the better looking of the two. Her hair was a richer colour and more abundant, her skin creamier, the cheeks tinged with a delicate pink, whereas her cousin's were deathly white; then the younger girl's features were prettier, more delicate, the contour of her face full and youthful, while Nella's countenance wore a hardened, pinched aspect that spoiled her looks, and her eyes were shifty, and uncertain in expression, having an odd trick of getting fixed and staring at nothing, with a concentrated intensity that was hardly pleasant.

Miss Hewitt's, on the contrary, were soft and melting, and met another's gaze full and fairly. Still the resemblance was very striking, and anyone not well acquainted with the peculiarities of each might easily be forgiven for mistaking one for the other.

"Is that it?"

"I think so," said the master of Sellyn Royal, giving a curious look at his niece, which Mrs. Derwent saw, and inwardly fumed at, as she did not want him to guess at the mental disturbances with which her unhappy child was threatened.

"You have not introduced your friend," she remarked, to distract his attention, looking at Guy. "His face seems strangely familiar to me."

"No wonder, Betty; he's Guy Chalmers, my old friend, Mortimer Chalmers's only child, you remember Mortimer, don't you?"

"Very well indeed," she answered promptly, holding out her hand; "and I am delighted to make the acquaintance of his son."

"Thanks, the pleasure is reciprocated," said Guy politely, as he bowed his acknowledgments of the compliment, and shook the two black fingers outstretched to him.

"How is your father?" asked the astute widow next, as they made their way towards the dining-room, where luncheon was laid.

"Quite well thank you."

"I am glad of that, I hope to see him soon," she continued, for she remembered that Mortimer Chalmers's acres were many, and his rent-roll long; and who knew, he might be looking out for a second wife. And as to Guy, well, he would do nicely for Nella; only before luncheon was over Mrs. Derwent's sharp eyes had seen how the land lay, and to her intense disgust concluded that young Chalmers was no longer in the market, but belonged absolutely to Nesta, a conclusion which annoyed her immensely; for, seeing that they both had money, what did they want to marry each other for?

Much fairer if they distributed it about by taking unto themselves poor spouses. It would not be her fault, she determined, if they did ultimately become man and wife.

She lost no time; did not let the grass grow under her feet. She made herself mistress of the situation by finding out everything there was

to find out, and commenced speculatively and quietly to advise her brother not to allow the marriage to take place for some time.

He was in an undecided state about it, for as he told her, he had a heart complaint that might terminate his existence at any moment (Nesta knew nothing of this, as he did not wish to cloud her young life by letting her know she might suddenly be deprived of a beloved parent) and he would wish to leave her in safe keeping; but Mrs. Derwent argued cleverly with him, and finally succeeded in inducing him to believe that she would be better in her hands, and that she would see to the finishing of her education and manners in a far superior way to a husband. Little by little she won him over, and at last the fiat went forth—they were not to be married for two years.

Guy was wild with anger, and told Mrs. Derwent flatly what he thought of her; but she took his remarks with extreme coolness, and went on the even tenor of her way, trying to induce Paul to send Nesta to Paris for a year's schooling, telling him that it was absolutely necessary, as she was going to make a grand match, and be a great lady in the county.

At first he was reluctant to part with his darling, but after a while he gave way before her specious arguments, and it was decided that Nesta should go.

Betty was delighted when she had gained her way. She had deep-laid plots and schemes to carry out, and the first step towards the successful carrying out of them was to get her clever niece out of the way. As a natural consequence Guy would not, during his fiancée's absence, be so often at the Royal, and she would have a free field for operations.

She saw her brother was failing fast; that the disease from which he suffered was getting a better grip on him; and heartless, pitiless as she was, she hurried on the separation between father and child, in order that her schemes might work to a successful issue.

CHAPTER IV.

THE summer days had worn away, autumn was approaching, and still it was hard to tell, hard to say, whether it was yet summer or if autumn had arrived. Certainly one was thinking of settling herself for a time, while the other was beginning to make preparations for departure, only the roses still bloomed gaily, the leaves were green, wild flowers bloomed here and there, the grass was of an emerald hue, the air soft, the sunrays warm and cheering, and in the forenoon it was like the merry month of June.

On the other hand, the days were beginning to draw in, and after sundown it was almost cold enough for a fire. There was only stubble in the cornfields, the hops had been pocketed, the thorn was covered with rubies, and the Michaelmas daisy was peeping out in odd corners, the apples getting ruddy-cheeked, the damsons fall-coloured, and the late peaches fell in dozens after a night with a touch of frost in it, while the horse-chestnuts had lost some of their leaves, and the briony was turning yellow.

Still Nature was lovely, despite her russet garb, and Nesta thought so as she paced slowly by Guy's side one sunny morning talking earnestly.

"Only one more day," she said, with a sigh, looking up at him.

"Only one," he echoed. "It is hard lines having to part with you, darling!"

"Yes, Guy, I wish I wasn't going."

"So do I. It is all Betty Derwent's doing!"

"I think it is."

"I am sure of it, although she denies it stoutly with that false smile of hers."

"I suppose she really thinks it is for my good," ventured the girl in defence, for her lover looked thoroughly angry, and gnawed his moustache savagely.

"I don't believe it," he returned quickly.

"She has some end in view, some design working in that crafty brain, and she thinks it will be better to have you out of the way, as your eyes

are young and sharp. Now dad," he called his future father-in-law dad, following Nesta's example, "is infatuated with her, and thinks her so clever that everything she does or says must be right!"

"Yes," with another sigh, deeper and heavier than the first.

"I should like to punish her for making you miserable, and if I ever have the chance I will," went on the young fellow, determinedly. "Your father had made up his mind to consent to our wedding being next month, and then this marplot steps in and spoils all, turning everything topsy-turvy. I will be even with her, meddlesome woman that she is."

"A year won't be so very long, dear," said poor Nesta, trying to comfort him, though she sorely needed comfort herself. "We must look forward to the future."

"Yes. That we hope may be all *coulour de rose*; only, somehow or other, I fear there may be no future for us—that is, no future spent together."

"Guy!" exclaimed the girl, looking up at him with frightened eyes, "what do you mean?"

"I hardly know, child," he answered, seriously. "I seem to have a foreboding that things will not be well with us—that we may be parted."

"If our love is steadfast, if we are faithful to each other, we cannot be parted," she said, simply.

"I shall be steadfast unto death," said her lover, pressing the hand he held.

"And I too," she answered, firmly; "death alone shall part us."

"My darling!" he murmured, kissing her under the friendly shade of a great apple-tree, whose many branches drooped towards the ground with their russet clusters. "Don't let us talk of death, rather of life, full and fair with the fruition of perfect happiness—such happiness as we hope will be ours when we are man and wife."

"Yes, Guy, that is certainly a pleasant subject. Only remember, my dear one, it was you who started, or rather gave the conversation a gloomy turn."

"Yes, and now I will try to give it a gay one."

"But tell me," she persisted, "what makes you think we shall be separated?"

"I can't tell, Nossy," he answered, affecting a lightness he did not feel. "I am a little blue, I suppose, at the prospect of your near departure; or perhaps," he added, with a little laugh, "my liver is out of order, and that makes me morbid and fanciful."

"I don't think you are livery," returned his companion.

"Why not?" he demanded.

"You don't look like it," she answered, glancing at his handsome face, glowing with health, though not just then with happiness.

"You shouldn't judge by appearances," he jests.

"No, indeed; one often makes mistakes doing that."

"Yes. Now to look at your cousin, and to judge by her appearance, you would think she was mildness and good-temper itself."

"Well, I think she is," remarked Nesta, reflectively.

"So did I," said Guy, drily, "until yesterday evening, when as I passed her room I heard her rowing the maid for having upset the ink-bottle over her gown."

"Was she angry?"

"Angry! That is hardly the word. She was simply furious—white with passion, and unable to control herself, for she went on just the same after she saw me."

"How odd!"

"Very much so; but do you know, dear, I think Nella is odd. One or two things she has said and done have struck me as being peculiar." No wonder he made this remark, for the unhappy girl had taken a mad fancy for her cousin's betrothed, and at times showed to him her feelings in no very guarded fashion. In fact, such had been her conduct that he had serious doubts as to her sanity, and more than once had been on the point of speaking to Mr. Hewitt about it,

only his own love affair and troubles had driven it out of his mind.

"What are the things?" asked Nesta, innocently.

"Oh, well, I can't exactly particularise now," returned the young man, in some embarrassment, for he could hardly tell her Nella had kindly offered to embrace him, had taken a buttonhole given by his intended from his coat, and replaced it by one gathered with her own fair hands, had asked him to walk with her, drive with her, row her on the river, and done many other queer things, of which no well-bred young lady would be guilty of unless slightly deranged—at least, that was his view of the matter; "only she is odd," he repeated.

"I have not noticed anything particular," said Miss Hewitt. "But then I have not the chance, perhaps; I don't see much of her. Do you know, Guy," this with extreme earnestness, and some visible reluctance; "I don't think she likes me."

"I don't think she does," he agreed, coolly. "Nor for the matter of that, your charming Aunt Betty."

"Oh, Guy! she is most kind and affectionate to me."

"Naturally she would be. You are the real mistress of Selwyn Royal. You have the power, if you choose to exercise it, of turning her out a homeless, moneyless creature, dependent on the absolute almsgiving of others, instead of being, as she is here, through the reflected greatness of her brother, a person of position, having wealth at her command, servants to do her bidding, carriages, horses, everything at her disposal that money can procure. Think how different her fate would have been if dad had refused to entertain her broad hints that she wanted to make her home with him, and beware of her affection! It is all simulated."

"Oh, Guy!" she repeated.

"It is," he said, doggedly. "I have seen her look at you, when she has thought herself unnoticed, in anything but a loving manner."

"But—why—should—she dislike—me," faltered the girl.

"For a very simple, yet very sufficient reason. You are rich, she is poor. You and your father benefit her, and people generally dislike those to whom they are under an obligation."

"How abominable!"

"Quite so. Then Nella is the next-of-kin. But for you, dear, she would inherit Selwyn Royal and all the land that lies around."

"Would she?" in great surprise.

"She would. Therefore, you see, you can't be much of a favourite with charming Mrs. Derwent."

"I hope you are wrong in thinking this."

"I know I am right, and be on your guard with her, Nesta. Talk of an angel or the other thing," he added, grimly, "here she comes!"

"Having a last farewell!" Mrs. Derwent said, airily.

"A farewell walk in this part of the grounds," he corrected her, coolly. "Not a last farewell. That will be said in Paris."

"In Paris! How!" she exclaimed, an angry light gleaming for an instant in her dark eyes.

"I am going to help to escort Miss Hewitt (he always called her "Miss Hewitt" to her aunt, much to that good lady's indignation) to the gay capital of *la belle France*."

"Indeed! I was not aware of this arrangement," she remarked, controlling her anger.

"No!" he rejoined, quietly and interrogatively, as he lit a cigar.

"No, I thought Paul was of opinion that I should be able to take care of Nesta on the journey, and see her safely to the school."

"Possibly he is; only I am not, you see."

"I see," she returned, raging inwardly.

"And so you will have the pleasure of my society in crossing!"

"Charmed, I am sure!" she sneered.

"I am sure you are," he laughed, looking her full in the face.

"Does my brother know of this arrangement?"

"Your brother does."

"Since when, may I ask?"

"Yesterday evening."

"And approves of it?"

"And approves of it."

"Oh!"

"Why that 'oh!' Is it strange that I should wish to see my future wife safely into the place that is to be her home for a year?"

"Of course not, nothing more natural," she replied, with a little graceful wave of her hand.

"I am glad you think so," meaningly.

"Do you make a long stay in the—what do you call it?—gay capital of *la belle France*?"

"I shall stay some weeks."

"Nesta," turning to her niece with a malicious smile, "I should not allow that."

"Why not?" asked the girl, her innocent eyes full of wonder.

"French women are very fascinating, and Mr. Chalmers is—yes, well, I must say it, very handsome. He may fall a prey to the fascinations of some fair Parisienne, and you would be minus your lover."

"I have no fear of that," returned Nesta, firmly.

"Gay loves me, he has sworn it—that is enough."

"Little fool!" muttered the amiable Betty, adding aloud, "Pshaw!"

"Men were deceivers ever—
One foot on sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never."

"You will find that out when you hear your *preux Chevalier* has run off with a pretty Marquise."

"Mrs. Derwent," said Guy sternly, drawing his tall figure up to its full height, "never say anything of this sort again to my intended wife. I will not allow it, and let me tell you it is utterly and entirely useless to try and shake the child's perfect faith and trust in me, a faith I shall never do anything to forfeit."

"Pooh! What heroics!" and with a nasty laugh she turned and went into the house, outwardly cool, inwardly hot with wrath and hate.

"Detestable woman!" muttered Chalmers, between his clenched teeth.

"Aunt was very nasty," allowed Nesta. "She seemed put out at the idea of your coming to Paris."

"That is exactly it. But don't let us talk of her any more; she isn't a pleasant topic. Come in, and I'll sing to you," and, entering the drawing-room, Guy went to the piano, and sitting down, rolled out, in his fine baritone voice,—

"With redder glow the broad sun burns
For stays for all our longings;
The moon from white to yellow turns,
The bright stars round her thronging."

Let us forget we have to part,
Our hearts with fancies cheating;
Too soon will come the bitter smart,
For twilight fast is fleeting."

Good-night, my love, but not good-bye,
For when that word is spoken,
Naught will be left to do but die,
Or live—with heartstrings broken."

CHAPTER V.

NEXT day Nesta set out on her journey, accompanied by her lover, father, aunt, and cousin. Mr. Hewitt and Nella only went as far as Folkestone, and then returned to the Royal. Mrs. Derwent having persuaded her brother that the journey would be dangerous to him in his delicate state of health.

The parting between father and child was very painful, and long after they were unable to distinguish individual figures on the pier—indeed, until it was quite lost to sight—the girl stood straining her eyes to catch one more glimpse of the form she loved.

At last when there was nothing to be seen but sea and sky, Guy got her a comfortable seat, and tried to interest her in what was going on around. He succeeded so well, that by the time they reached Boulogne she was looking quite cheerful, and noticed everything eagerly. It was the first time she had set foot on foreign soil, and naturally the strange sights and sounds bore a great interest for her.

Not so with Aunt Betty! That veteran traveller had made the acquaintance of a well-preserved, fairly good-looking, middle-aged man, who she soon discovered did not live a hundred miles from the Royal, and who interested her greatly, as he bore quite a striking resemblance to her first and only love, Courtney Harcourt.

Guy was exceedingly displeased that Mrs. Derwent invited this stranger into the carriage he had reserved for them to go on to Paris to, and told her so without the slightest reserve. However, he couldn't insult the man, and so they all went on to the capital together.

He was delighted with the school at which his intended was to stay, and also with the lady who conducted it. She looked honest and good-hearted, and he left Nesta in her charge, feeling that there at least she would be safe from all harm.

He did not leave for a week, remaining on to watch Mrs. Derwent, whose conduct, considering she was a rather recent widow, he disapproved of immensely.

At last the money Paul had supplied gave out, and reluctantly she returned to England, Guy following in her wake, and never letting her out of his sight till she was once more installed in her brother's house.

Then, and then only, he accepted an invitation to shoot grouse, and went northwards, enjoying himself as well as he could under the circumstances, and looking forward eagerly to Christmas, when Nesta was to return to England for the holidays.

Three weeks before that time he received a telegram which startled and horrified him. Mr. Hewitt had been found dead in his bed that morning. That was the message his father sent, and without a moment's delay he set out for the Royal.

Arriving there he found all confusion, and leaving his father to watch matters, went straight to Paris to fetch Nesta, bringing her back without any break or rest in his journey.

She was overwhelmed with grief, he with suspicion; but his suspicions were set at rest by the doctor who had attended Paul Hewitt for some years past, and who explained to him his long-standing disease of the heart.

Guy was by no means glad to hear all the reading of the will, that Mrs. Derwent was left Nesta's guardian. It gave her an amount of power over her niece which made him shudder to think of, and he was—powerless! quite powerless.

His love was not of age; and when "Aunt Betty" declined to accede to his request that they might be quietly married, and announced that Nesta was to go back to Paris and finish out the year of schooling, he could do nothing, and had to let her go, contenting himself with escorting her as before, and begging her to write to him. Her letters, however, by Mrs. Derwent's commands, were limited to one a month.

Very dissatisfied, very wretched was the poor young fellow, and after loitering away a month in Paris, he went on to Norway on a fishing expedition.

He did not stay there long, though. He was restless, full of fears, and shadowy forebodings, and after being for nearly eight weeks without hearing from Nesta, he travelled back, and going to the school demanded an interview with her. To his amazement he was told that "Madame" had fetched "Mam'selle" away a month before!

With wrath and fear at his heart, he crossed hastily to England, and went straight home. The moment his eyes lighted on his father's face he saw there was something wrong.

"What is it, father?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Did—did—you—not—get my—telegram?" faltered the old man, looking at him with plying eyes.

"Your—telegram! No, Heaven! Tell me what is it!"

"Nesta!"

"Oh, Heaven! What of her!" he moaned.

"Can—you bear it?" anxiously regarding him.

"Anything—anything save this awful suspense."

"Poor darling—she is—"
 "Not dead!" he interrupted.
 "Yes, poor darling, dead."
 "Great Heaven!" and with an awful cry he sank into a chair, covering his blanched face with his trembling hands.

"Tell me—how—it—was," he said, brokenly, after a time, still shading his face.

"It was terribly sudden," said the old man, laying one hand on his son's shoulder. "Madame Granier wrote she was ill. Mrs. Derwent set off at once, and brought her to the Royal."

"Did you see her?"

"Not alive, my poor boy."

"Ah!" with a groan.

"We hardly heard she was ill, when the news came she was dead."

"And then you saw her!"

"Yes. She was lying in her coffin, in a white silk dress, snowy flowers on her bosom, and at her feet."

"And how did she look—placid?"

"Yes, and fair—so fair, poor child. There was a glass lid to the coffin—"

"A glass lid!" he interrupted again. "Why that!"

"She died of a fearfully contagious fever, and so her aunt had the glass put on at once to prevent further mischief, and so that anyone could see her who chose without fear of catching it."

"How terrible!" and he burst into an uncontrollable fit of sobbing.

"When did it take place?"

"Last Wednesday."

"Nearly a week ago. Then you sent the telegram to Drothing?"

"Yes."

"That is how I missed it. I have come from Paris."

"My poor boy! What can I say to console you?"

"Nothing! Father, the blow is almost too heavy to bear. Who attended her. Was it Godfrey, their own doctor?"

"No, some friend of Mrs. Derwent's. I believe one of the doctors of her late husband's regiment."

"Ah!" exclaimed Guy, starting up suddenly.

"Why did they not have Godfrey? He might have saved her!"

"I hardly think so. It was a very bad case."

"I wonder was there foul play?" said Guy, sternly.

"Oh, no! Her aunt was in the deepest distress."

"She!" exclaimed his son in contempt.

"Why, she hated Nesta, and envied her her inheritance. Remember, father, her daughter Nella is the next-of-kin. Does that put a different complexion on matters?"

"I never thought of that. Her fine fortune won't be of much use to her, though, and Mrs. Derwent's distress was very real."

"Why will it not be of any use to her?"

"She has gone mad!"

"I am not surprised to hear it; she seemed to me very queer. Is she at the Royal?"

"Yes. Mrs. Derwent will not send her away."

"How long has she been so?"

"Since a short time before her cousin's death."

"Ah! I must see Mrs. Derwent. Try and throw some light on this mystery—for mystery there is, I am sure. My darling can't be dead!"

"You forget, Guy," said Mr. Chalmers, gently, "that I saw the poor child lying dead in her coffin, and that the certificates were correct."

"The doctor was that woman's friend, you say?"

"True. The one who attended her during the brief illness. After death, Godfrey saw her."

"Then there is no hope left!"

"I fear none."

"Still I will see that fiend," and taking his hat he went slowly and heavily up to the Royal.

Mrs. Derwent was at home, and when he was ushered in rose to greet him, robed in ermine from head to foot, with outstretched hands.

"So Nesta is dead!" he said sternly, refusing to see the outstretched hands.

"Alas, yes!" she returned, with a sob, apply-

ing a handkerchief to her eyes that did not require it.

"It was strangely sudden!" he went on, suspiciously, "remarkably so. People will talk, seeing that you and your child benefit by my poor darling's death!"

"It has been very sudden!" she agreed quietly, "but Dr. Walshe, who attended her, is here," turning to Eardly Walshe, who rose immediately, and advanced towards Guy, "and will give you all the particulars if you wish to have them."

"I should like to have the true particulars," he said, pointedly. "Not a tittle of lies."

"Strong words to use to a lady," expostulated the doctor.

"My remark was not addressed to you," returned Guy, with a contemptuous glance at the man's sinister face.

"Miss Hewitt died of a terrible fever."

"So I have heard," interrupted Chalmers, drily. "That is no news. How long was she ill?" speaking to Mrs. Derwent.

"Altogether about four days."

"And why did not Godfrey, the family medical man, attend her?"

"Dr. Walshe happened to be staying here, and as it was a case of extreme urgency I asked him to prescribe for her."

"I see your friend is making a long visit."

"Not too long to please me. You seem to forget," with extreme hauteur, "that I am now mistress here."

"I forget nothing," he rejoined shortly, "only your daughter is mistress here really, not you."

"Ah, do not speak of her," she cried, with well-assumed grief, "she is mad!"

"I know that! It is a remarkable coincidence that she should go mad just as my darling died."

"Remarkable! You, however, are the chief cause of her mental derangement."

"I! Absurd!" exclaimed Guy.

"Not at all. She loved you, unfortunately, and as you did not reciprocate, it sent her out of her mind, poor child."

"You forget that I was not free."

"Oh, no, I don't. You might have broken with Nesta, and thus have saved my poor girl."

"I think you are mad, too," said the young man coldly. "I shall not stay now to listen to your wild words, only remember I shall watch you."

"You can, and welcome," she retorted insolently, and he turned and left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

FIVE days passed on. Guy was full of a dull despair. He could not, would not, believe that Nesta was dead. He knew that his father had seen her lying in her coffin, snowy flowers on her cold breast, a chill of death on her fair face and closed lids. He could not have made a mistake—he who had seen Nella almost every day since she was a year old. And yet—and yet—he could not realise that his sweet young love was dead, in the pride of her youth and beauty, all her blooming loveliness stiff and white, and pulseless, rigid, in the embrace of the dread King of Terror. No, he could not realise it; and doubting, and wretched, and restless, hoping, he knew not what, and fearing at the same time that all that made his life worth living had gone out of it for ever, he would wander about the precincts of the Royal, gazing at the window of the room in which she had died, picturing the death scene, thus tearing open afresh the bleeding wounds, and causing himself more pain. And yet it was a sweet task to the unhappy young man to wander near the place that had been the birth-place and home of his beloved, and he never failed to pay it a visit at some time during the four-and-twenty hours of each day.

One day, early in February, as he stood looking at the old house in that dim twilight hour between day and night, he saw a light flash in one of the narrow windows of a room on the ground floor of the east wing. It burned steadily for a moment, and then disappeared. Thinking this curious, as he knew that part of the Royal was

uninhabited, he made his way cautiously up to the house, and tried to peer in at this particular casement; but it was too high, the end of it being just on a level with the top of his head. He could not look in, and after a few moments he turned to leave. As he did so a faint tapping attracted his attention, and as he was now some little way off, on a slight mound, he could see better, and after a time made out a white hand waving and gesticulating.

Once more he approached the window, and strove to clamber up to it, but the stones were smooth, and offered no foothold, and after an hour or two, when night finally settled down, and the outline even of the casement was lost to view in the general gloom, he gave up his attempts in despair, and went home.

He told his father of the affair, and by his advice watched daily, concealed by a thick growth of laurel bushes from all observation. To no purpose, however. A month passed, and he was thinking of giving up this fruitless occupation, when one evening he found beneath the window a fine white handkerchief, in the corner of which was embroidered a big N. He understood it then. Nella, Mrs. Derwent's mad daughter, was confined in those solitary rooms. Her wild screams and piteous cries, which Guy had heard through some of his father's servants, who gossiped with those belonging to Selwyn Royal, were dreadful, and her mother could not bear to hear them.

(Continued on page 111.)

BELLE BRANDON'S ESCAPE.

—201—

"AN elopement? Oh, surely, surely, Belle, you never can be in earnest!"

Belle Brandon sat on a fallen log, whose mossy cylinder was half hidden in tall, plummy ferns, and where the trembling July sunbeams rained down through soft summer foliage like a cascade of gold. An artist would have painted her as a wood-nymph, with her hair of braided sunshine, her deep, limpid eyes, and the peach-like bloom upon her perfect cheeks.

And yet this dew-eyed beauty was neither more nor less than a sewing-girl, who worked a machine in a big shop at half-a-crown a day; a girl who had grown up on a diet of yellow-covered novels, and dreamed of knights and ladies, and perilous adventures.

"Yes," said Belle, lifting her deep blue eyes, "an elopement. Isn't it romantic? And isn't he handsome?"

Annie Martin looked sadly down into the eyes that were so like blue flowers.

"Belle," said she, "I beseech of you to think twice about this business. Have you forgotten John Burt?"

"John Burt! Only a cutter in the shop!"

"An honest, honourable man!" said Annie, impressively.

"Why don't you take him yourself, since he is such a paragon!" retorted Belle, saucily.

"Because he loves no one but you."

"Then he may leave off loving me at his leisure," said the girl, carelessly. "I don't care a fig for him, and never shall. I am going to marry Mr. Graham; and I never would have told you of the elopement if I had supposed you were going to be so ill-natured about it. My father is as unjustly prejudiced against him as you are, and so I am driven to it."

And Belle tried to veil her exaltation beneath a tone of injury as she rose up and began to make her way through the tall ferns.

Annie looked wistfully after her.

"A spoiled, harmless little beauty!" she said to herself. "But Mr. Burt was kind to me when I came here, friendless and alone; and he loves her. For his sake I will not stand quietly by and see her rush on to ruin!"

"You see," Belle Brandon had told her confidentially, "I am to go to the shop on Wednesday just as usual, so that my father will not suspect anything, and then I am to feign a headache, just

at the time for the train, and leave work, and go on to London, Brighton, or Hastings. He comes there the next day, and we're married."

But Annie shook her head dubiously.

"I don't like Mr. Graham's looks," said she.

"He's just exactly like the portraits of 'Lord Byron,'" retorted Belle, triumphantly.

"He is only a travelling salesman."

"But he's to be a partner in the firm in the autumn. He told me so himself, and he showed me the photograph of his employer's daughter, who is madly in love with him."

"Why don't he marry her, then?"

And now Belle dimpled into radiant contentment.

"I suppose because he likes me best," said she.

"Oh, Belle! And you believe all this farago!" sighed Annie, despairingly.

"You're only jealous because you haven't such a lover yourself!" retorted Belle, frowning under her curls like a lovely, wilful child.

And then Annie Martin abandoned the task of remonstrance; but, for all that, the thought of John Bart's heartbreak lay sore and heavy at her inmost soul.

"She may go to ruin her own way," thought Annie; "but she shall not drag him down with her. Graham—I know I have the name in my head somehow—it carries a disagreeable remembrance with it. I remember now! It was a Mr. Graham that boarded so long with Aunt Jane, and then went away without settling his score! Graham! that was the name! I'll go and see Aunt Jane this very night. I can easily get there by the nine o'clock train, and back again in time for work to-morrow morning. And if there is anything to be found out, I'll find it. John Bart was good to me once, and I shall never forget it!"

"Can I speak to you to-night, Belle?"

Belle Brandon was hurrying away from the great work-room, where the buzz of machines was gradually decreasing, and the girls were beginning to look for their hats and cloaks, when John Bart advanced towards her.

"No!" she retorted, petulantly. "I'm in a hurry."

"Then I will walk along towards home with you."

"I'd rather go alone!"

He cast one sad, reproachful glance towards her, and stepped back.

"Belle—" began he.

"Miss Brandon, if you please!" said the girl, half defiant, half frightened. "And I'll trouble you to keep your distance!"

And away she flew, like an arrow out of a bow.

She was just in time for the train, and, leaning back in the seat, reflected joyfully that she was already beginning the elopement.

Pretty blossom-like little fool! How little had she calculated the end of her rash experiment. And yet to her it seemed that she was beginning to live romance.

It was towards ten o'clock at night when she reached London, and found the lodging to which she had been directed.

"Oh!" said the plump, motherly landlady. "It's the young lady from Reading as a room was engaged for by Mr. Graham. Yes, it's all right, miss. Please to walk up. The lady's there, waiting for you."

"The lady?"

"Mrs. Graham, you know," said the landlady. "And a fine, handsome person she is, only a trifle stout, as we all is when we gets towards forty odd."

Belle stood as still and white as if she was turned to stone.

"His mother, I suppose," she told herself, regaining courage. "How kind of him to send her here to welcome me!"

At the same moment the landlady flung open the door of a small cosy room, with a bright lamp burning on the table.

"It's the young lady, mem," said she, dipping a curtsy.

And a fat woman, showily dressed in very common materials, waddled forward.

"Oh!" said she, "good evening, my dear. So you're the young lady that's going to marry my husband!"

"Your husband!" echoed Belle.

"Don't be alarmed," said the fat woman, busy herself with the strings of the girl's hat. "We was divorced eight years ago. There was reason enough for a dozen divorces. He's had another wife since. But don't worry. He's got rid of her, too. She's dead. And now he's made up to you! Well, I think you'll have enough of him, a great, lazy, drinkin' vagabond, as was brought up in the workhouse, and served two years in jail for forgin' a cheque for twenty pounds!"

Belle stood pale and shocked.

"It is false!" gasped she. "You are inventing these lies to estrange me from him."

"Bless your heart, my dear, no I ain't," said the fat woman, with a comfortable, chuckling laugh. "What should I gain by estrangin' you from him? I don't care. I've my marriage lines to show, and my papers of divorce, and he's welcome to marry as many new wives as Bluebeard, for all I care."

Belle turned to the landlady.

"How early does the first train for Reading start in the morning?" said she.

"At six o'clock," said the landlady. "It's a workman's train."

"I'll go by it," said Belle.

"And how about the gentleman as engaged the rooms?" asked the landlady.

"I'll never speak to him again!" said Belle, with spirit.

She was at her machine the next morning, as usual, and when John Bart came past she looked up shyly into his face.

"Please, Mr. Bart," said she, "won't you forgive me for being so cross with you last night? I—I am very sorry. And if you can walk home with me to-night—"

That was enough for Mr. Bart. They were engaged before the moon was an hour high that night!

For Belle's fancy could not endure the idea of being third wife to a man who had once graced a prison, and Mr. Graham never beheld his pretty fiancée again.

And Annie Martin kept the secret of her elopement well.

MY SWEETHEART.

—101—

CHAPTER LVI.

Who shall attempt to picture the days that followed for Gregor Thorpe? He had told himself, if Paula died from the effects of that wound, Mildred should pay the penalty of her crime. And now Paula was no more; yet his very soul shrank from taking the initial step which would bring Mildred to the gallows or a prison cell.

The more he thought over the matter, the more agonized he became.

"For the first time in my life I need advice," he told himself, wretchedly.

But to whom could he go with so startling a story! Suddenly he thought of an old lawyer who had been the life-long friend of his uncle, and he determined to lay the case before him in all its bearings, and let his decision guide him.

That evening he made his way to the old lawyer's villa in the suburbs. Mr. Phillips was amazed when he glanced at the card his servant had given him, and learned who his visitor was.

"Now, what can he mean by coming here at this time of the evening?" muttered the lawyer, surprised. "Not a social call, I should imagine; and yet everyone who knows me understands the fact that I never permit man, woman, or child to broach the subject of business to me outside of my office."

A moment later Gregor entered the lawyer's library.

"What a strong, sturdy, handsome young man he is growing into!" thought the lawyer, as he placed a seat for his visitor.

"I found myself in your vicinity," began Gregor, "and I could not help doing myself the honour of dropping in for a few moments' chat."

"I am delighted," declared Mr. Phillips. "The nephew of my old friend is always welcome."

After an hour's chat or more, the lawyer discovered there was something weighing heavily upon the young man's mind. His curiosity was aroused, and by dint of cautious questioning he elicited the whole story from Gregor. But, with natural shrewdness, Gregor did not betray that it was his own case which he cited, but in an off-manner related the story as an anecdote which he had recently read in one of the daily papers.

"I have never read of a stranger case," repeated Gregor. "The young girl to whom this young man we speak about was betrothed as was lovely as a dream, and seemingly as innocent as an angel. Who would dream of the after events which I have described when the young man begged her to release him from the betrothal, because he had found one whom he could love better? Who would dream, I ask, that this seeming angel could ever have been guilty of the terrible sin of planning so desperate a deed against her innocent rival, and of carrying it out! The fair young bride that was to be asleep in her grave from the effects of the bullet-wound inflicted by the hand of her rival. And now the question which puzzles me is: Would it be humane for the young man who has just been cheated of his bride to let her slayer go free? And, on the other hand, could the lips that had once met hers with love's tender kisses be the ones to denounce that young girl to the justice-loving world? Could he who had once been her lover, who knows of the horrible crime that was committed because of her hopeless love for himself, commit her?"

"It is a most uncommon case," admitted the lawyer. "Truly, the young man's position is unenviable. But I should say no amount of punishment could bring back the young bride. Why should the young man who had once been her lover make her life more bitter? Her own conscience will be torture enough," resumed the lawyer.

Gregor's face flushed; a great sigh rose to his lips. He chafed indifferently for a while about other matters, and soon after took his leave; but his heart was in a whirl of contending emotions. Gregor had come at last to a conclusion, and that was to let Mildred's conscience be her accuser. He would set her free—a poor freedom at best—and never look upon her face again.

All that night he paced the floor of his room feverishly, and the next morning, as soon as the hour arrived when visitors were admitted to the institution, Gregor presented himself there.

The matron received him very graciously, and sent for Mildred at once, at his request.

When she received the message to kindly come to the reception-room, as Mr. Thorpe wished to have a few moments' conversation with her, her astonishment knew no bounds.

Her fair young face flashed and then paled. With slow steps she obeyed the summons, and a moment later was standing hesitatingly in the doorway.

Gregor heard the well-known sound of foot-steps, and a great embarrassment seized him.

He rose from his seat and stepped forward to greet her as she entered the room hesitatingly.

"Miss—Miss Garstin," he began, gravely, "I am come to say to you that in my opinion it might be as well to permit you to go hence unmolested. If you can find peace after what you have done, enjoy it. I cannot hold you up for punishment by an angry, justice-loving world."

Mildred looked at him in the greatest of wonder. His words puzzled her inexplicably. "After what she had done!" What could he mean by that? No wonder she was bewildered.

"I have no answer to make you," she said proudly—"indeed, I know of none."

He looked at her keenly.

"Have you no regret," he asked, sternly, "for what you have done?"

"Why should I have!" replied Mildred. "There is not an action of my life that I would do differently if similar occasions governed them."

At this his face grew stormy.

"You are unworthy of pity or consideration by Heaven or man!" he cried. "You have a face which might make an artist's fame as the emblem of innocence, but at heart you are surely the cruellest of women. But come; I am here to take you from this place. You are to go back to Mrs. Morris—she will be expecting you at any moment now—for I have told her that you were coming. I have a cab at the door."

"Thank you; but I can make my way there by myself," Mildred responded, with dignity.

"I have promised to bring you to her," he retorted, coldly, "otherwise I should not insist, I beg that you will come at once."

The matron and those about the institution parted with Mildred with great emotion. She was so sweet, so gentle, and so very sad and patient she had won her way to every heart.

The drive to Mrs. Morris's was not a long one. Gregor maintained a rigid silence all the way. At the door he handed her out of the vehicle, but declined to enter himself, and drove rapidly away again.

Mrs. Morris came hurrying down to the gate to meet Mildred and much to the girl's surprise, she took her in her arms, sobbing bitterly, exclaiming:

"Poor child! my poor Mildred! Oh, would to Heaven you had never left my roof to have come back to it like this!"

"Why, what is the matter?" cried Mildred—"has the whole world gone crazy?"

"It is only you, my dear, whose brain has been turned," returned Mrs. Morris, with quivering lips and moistened eyes. "I wish to Heaven I could have prevailed upon you never to have left me."

By this time they had reached the house.

Mrs. Morris placed Mildred in her favourite armchair, then threw herself on her knees before the girl.

"Oh, Mildred, tell me the whole story," she cried out in agony—"keep nothing from me. You know I will find pardon for you if it is in human reason. I can understand how sorely you were tempted. I am not one to turn against you in your hour of need. Again I say, keep nothing from me, Mildred."

Mildred's large dark eyes scanned her face in the greatest amazement.

"I have nothing to keep from you that it would be worth while to tell you," declared Mildred. Suddenly it occurred to her that her being shut up in that institution was what Mrs. Morris referred to, and her face brightened. "I will explain all that has occurred from beginning to end," she said, simply. "You know that I left you to watch over Miss—Miss Barton. I nursed her back to health and strength, and on the afternoon of the day on which she was to marry Gregor Thorpe, I left her, because my services were no longer needed, and started to come back to you. Ere I could reach the gate, Mr. Thorpe came hurrying down the path after me, and clutched my arm, crying out: 'You cruel, cruel girl! How could you have done it?' He dragged me back to the house and thrust me into a darkened room; and there, stunned and bewildered, I remained until he came to release me. He forced me into a carriage in waiting and took me to the Institute from which I wrote you, and there they kept me a close prisoner. All of this seems inexplicable to me," added Mildred.

Mrs. Morris started to her feet and stood regarding the girl with wide-opened eyes.

"Tell me, Mildred," she cried, breathlessly, "are you innocent or guilty of—of what they charge you?"

Mildred drew back and looked at her, exclaiming, in bewilderment:

"Are you mad, too?"

"Yours is a very different story from what Gregor Thorpe tells," she said, huskily, but very gravely. "He tells me, Mildred, that you attempted a most cruel crime—that you shot at a young girl, intending to murder her in cold blood. You told me that you had hidden nothing from me. Gregor tells me that he hid you away in an asylum, to await the extent of the

girl's injuries and keep you secreted from the minions of the law."

The look of horror that spread over poor Mildred's face was pitiful to behold. All in an instant she remembered hearing a shot as she walked down the gravel path.

The bullet had hit someone, and he quite believed that she had fired the shot.

Oh, Heaven! the deep and bitter horror of it! She, who would not even hurt a butterfly or the tiniest object that had life!

She threw up her white hands and fell in a dead swoon at Mrs. Morris's feet.

"I did not have time to finish my sentence," said Mrs. Morris to herself. "I was about to add that the girl was dead, but perhaps it is as well that she does not know that just now."

Mildred was taken to her own little room, and the curtains of her window were closely drawn.

When Mrs. Morris returned, an hour later, she found Mildred's door locked and the sound of violent weeping coming from within.

"Mildred!" she called, gently. "Open the door, my dear."

"Please leave me to myself," returned Mildred's sobbing voice; "I want to be alone."

"It would be better not," pleaded Mrs. Morris, earnestly. "In this, the darkest hour of your life, you need companionship, consolation. I have something to say to you. It is better that you should hear it from my lips than from the lips of anyone else."

"No," said Mildred again. "Please leave me to myself; I do not want to hear anything. My heart is breaking. Oh, please go away!"

"But, my dear, it is something that you must hear sooner or later," urged Mrs. Morris, with great persistence. "It is about Miss Barton."

This brought Mildred to the door at once, and, oh, how pitifully red and swollen her poor dark eyes were!

Mrs. Morris led Mildred gently to a seat, and, clasping her hands tightly in her own, took a seat on the sofa beside the girl, nerving herself for her task.

CHAPTER LVII

WHEN Paula returned to consciousness, she found the little maid standing by her bedside regarding her curiously.

"Are you better?" she asked, bending over Paula, and putting out her hand timidly and touching her fluffy curls that strayed over the pillow.

"Yes," murmured Paula, gazing wonderingly about her. "But where am I?" she asked, her eyes roving round the unfamiliar place.

"A sailor brought you here," replied the girl. "You were—"

"Oh, then I was saved—saved!" cried Paula, incoherently. "I thought the yacht was going down."

"The man said no one knew your name, or who you were," the girl went on; "so they could not take you to your home, but brought you here. If you will tell me where your friends are, I will send for them."

"No," said Paula; "that will only alarm them. I will go to them as soon as I am strong enough."

At that instant the ring on the girl's finger attracted Paula's attention.

"Where did you get that?" she cried, snatching at the girl's hand.

"It was given to me by a good, sweet young lady who has just left this place," returned the girl.

"Take it off and let me see it, please," returned Paula; and reluctantly the girl complied with her request. "It belongs to my sister Mildred!" cried Paula, excitedly. "Tell me again how you came by it. See! here are my mother's initials in it!" and again the girl repeated her words.

"You must give it to me!" cried Paula. "I cannot permit you to retain it. I do not believe my sister ever gave you this. She would not part with it unless it were a matter of almost life or death!"

"I shall not part with it, lady," retorted the girl. "What was given to me I shall keep. If

you make an enemy of me, I can make this place hot enough for you while you are here. I'd like to know who you are anyhow. Look at your coarse, shabby clothes. You are a working-girl, and no better than myself, I am sure of that. I should like to see me give up my fine ring to you. You had better get up and go about your business if you are able to leave this place, and I shall not help you, either."

Paula essayed no reply to this rude speech, but her better judgment prevailed.

"Mildred shall come for it herself," she determined; and she said no more; but she profited by the girl's significant remark to leave the place at once.

She was thankful for the loan of a brown veil which the girl very grudgingly made her.

With beating heart, Paula made her way quickly towards the Barton mansion, picturing to herself how amazed Miss Dawes would be at her sudden appearance.

She could imagine the consternation of all her friends, and of even the servants, and how they would hail with delight her miraculous restoration to them.

But, alas! how alight a thing changes human lives! In waiting on the curbstone for an omnibus to pass, she found herself side by side with two ladies.

They were conversing eagerly together, so deeply engrossed in their subject that they were completely oblivious to even the presence of the slim, shabbily attired girl at their elbow, whose face was covered with a thick brown veil.

One of them was speaking, and that voice was like an electric shock to Paula.

It was the voice of Miss Dawes, and at a glance Paula saw that it was her mother who was with her.

"I am sure it could be done," Miss Dawes was saying, eagerly; "for there never yet was a young man who was not susceptible if the right influence was brought to bear upon him; and Gregor Thorpe is particularly tender-hearted; and besides, I've made quite an inroad into his friendship."

"That is very true, my dear," returned Miss Dawes's mother; "and if you do not capture Gregor Thorpe, I shall always say that it is your own fault. He comes to the house every day to talk over the loss of his sweetheart, and have you condole with him upon the subject, and of course you will turn it to advantage. Why, three-fourths of the men marry in a single year after their wives die; and so I hold that a man who loses only a sweetheart can be captured in one half of that time, or less. Of course, Gregor Thorpe will marry, and my word for it, despite the affection he held for Miss Barton, he will marry soon."

"And I shall be his bride if it lies within human power," returned Miss Dawes, confidently.

They got into the omnibus which stopped for them at the crossing, and it rolled away, leaving the little figure in the coarse brown dress and thick veil still standing on the same spot, faint and dazed, with the words she had heard still ringing in her ears.

Gregor Thorpe would marry in three months! That is what Mrs. Dawes had said.

Her heart throbbed almost to bursting at the very thought.

Suddenly an idea came to her. What an excellent plan it would be for her to remain dead to the world, as she was now supposed to be, and watch Gregor Thorpe. She would see for herself if he mourned for her; she would test his love to the fullest extent.

How her soul rebelled at Miss Dawes's words! It had never occurred to her to be jealous of her companion, plain—quiet Miss Dawes. Who would ever have dreamed that she was secretly in love with Gregor Thorpe.

Here was treachery where she expected it least. Ah, what a cruel awakening!

The blood seemed to course like fire through her veins; the very breeze seemed repeating the words, "He will be sure to marry within three months."

Again, in the moment of her greatest sorrow, her thoughts turned towards Mildred, and she resolved to go at once to her sister.

But she found this more difficult than she had ever dreamed of, for she did not know Mildred's address, nor had she ever heard of such a person as Mrs. Morris.

She had not a penny in the world—no shelter, nowhere to go, no friends.

"Heaven help me! what shall I do!" sobbed Paula.

She wandered up one street and down another, trying to think the matter out and reason clearly, when all at once her feet strayed into a familiar thoroughfare.

Looking suddenly up, she saw, with a start of surprise, the silk manufactories looming directly before her where she had once been employed in the far-off past that seemed centuries ago to her.

They were Gregor's now—Gregor, who had professed such great love for her, and who they said would forget her and wed another, alas! so cruelly soon!

Suddenly an inspiration came to her. She need not wander about the streets, cold and hungry, in a land of plenty.

She remembered that there were similar places in the next street, and thither she bent her steps.

She had known what the bread of toil was in other days. There was no other way, if she wished to remain *incognito*, but to take up the thread where she had laid it down and earn her own bread again. She must forget that she had known every luxury since then that wealth could purchase; that her every desire had been gratified with a lavishness that a princess might have envied; that the curled darlings of wealth and fashion had sued for her slightest smile with all the fervour of the knights of old.

It was bitterly hard to face the world once more and put all that from her, and meet the stern realities of life again. But she had strength of purpose; she must know for herself if Gregor Thorpe, who had always sworn such undying love for her, could forget her and ever wed another.

She remembered many a time that he had said that if she were to die he could not live without her, he loved her so.

Across her brain there drifted the memory of lines she had heard somewhere. Surely the person who had uttered them had found love false, too. Did they tell in rhyme the sad story of her pitiful love-dream?

"She breathes a whisper out on the stillness,
Out on the waves of the desolate air;
Out of the depths of her heart's fond fulness,
She breathes this thrilling but voiceless prayer:

"If this be love that has come unto me,
Let it go not hence, for my heart would break;
If it be but a dream's endeavour to woo me
To a waking death, may I never wake!"

The words seemed to sear her brain with scorching flame. She could not forget them. Yes, she would see for herself whether her lover was true or false.

When Paula made up her mind to any course, she steadily pursued it to the very end, no matter what trials beset her path.

She realised that the first step she must take would be to seek employment to earn her daily bread.

Resolutely she ascended the steps of the great building.

She felt confident that there was no one there who would ever recognise her as Paula Garstin, and surely not one among them would think of associating her with society's lost queen—Miss Barton.

A score or more of applicants—for they had that number daily—were in the office seeking situations when Paula timidly stepped forward and made known her errand.

The usual questions were put to her, and, as she seemed to have a knowledge of the work required, she was at once engaged and assigned her task without delay, as they were particularly short of hands just then.

She found a lodging in the same room with the girl who had the room next to her. She was the only one among the many who seemed inclined to take to Paula.

"Oh, my! how dainty she tries to be!" And

she certainly feels above us," they declared one to the other; "but she shall see she can't play the fine lady over us! One girl is as good as another here, and if she gives us any more of her airs, she'll soon find out she's come into the wrong locality."

The girl who had the room next to Paula was the only one who spoke up bravely in her defence.

Paula's quick ears had heard her words, although they had been uttered in sibilant whispers, and her lonely, tired heart warmed to the girl who had spoken such kind words for her.

At the first opportunity Paula went up to her and thanked her; and thus it happened that she and Jane Bolton became devoted friends, sharing the same humble little room, the same bed, and dividing their scant earnings for food.

But each day, from her window, Paula watched with beating heart as she saw Gregor Thorpe pass to and fro to his office in the block adjoining.

CHAPTER LVIII.

WHEN Dudley found himself thrown so unceremoniously into the mad, seething waters by his enraged companions, he knew it would be worse than madness to again strike out for the yacht; but, with the energy born of desperation, he struck out for the nearest line of shore, which, even in his dazed condition, he realised must be some two miles distant.

Would he be able to breast those terrible waves for that distance? Would his energies last and serve him in this great peril?

By the merest chance Dudley saw, a little way ahead of him, a dark object which floated on the waves. He knew this must be a log, and a glad cry broke from his blanched lips. He struck out for it and grasped it eagerly, clinging to it during the long hours that followed, until, weak and exhausted, Dudley found himself at length but a few yards from shore. This he managed to reach by the greatest effort, and sunk down, almost fainting, when his feet at length staggered upon *terra firma*.

During all the long hours that followed till daylight broke cold and grey, Dudley lay, shivering and unconscious, on the spot where he had fallen. Here he was found in the early morning by a young girl who was peering the spot on the way to her work. She gave a little cry when she first saw the upturned handsome face, so ghastly white in the early light.

"Oh! what can be the matter?" cried the young girl, breathlessly. "The poor gentleman is covered with ice! It is frozen to his garments—even the dark moustache and dark, curling hair are covered with it! But I must not waste a moment's time idling here; I must summon help for him at once."

Like a deer the girl flew breathlessly down the trodden path she had just traversed to the tavern at the cross-roads.

"Oh! Mr. Jenkins!" she cried, with a gasp, "you and your son Phil must come at once! A young man, half dead with the cold, is lying on the beach. He must have lain where he has fallen on the beach for long hours, for the tide has come in and swept over him. His clothing is a literal mass of ice. It is a wonder that the waves did not sweep him out to sea! Oh, Mr. Jenkins, do come quick, for I am sure the young man will die!" And she caught hold of his arm, and calling to his son to come on, the girl fairly dragged the old gentleman, hatless as he was, out of the house and down the beach, while Phil brought up the rear.

"He's certainly a gentleman," declared old Mr. Jenkins, with visions of a big board bill running in his mind. "Here, Phil, lend a hand, and we'll get him into the house at once."

But a dark scowl overspread the face of the son as he looked at Dudley's white, handsome face, then at the girl who was bending anxiously over him. Grudgingly enough he assisted his father in raising him from the ground and carrying him down the beach.

"I will step in on my way coming home to-night," called the girl.

"You needn't, Miss Lina," muttered Phil,

under his breath, "for you will not find him at the house if I can help it. Humph! how strange it is that a fop will take a young girl's fancy every time—even as sensible a girl as my Lina! I shall take good care that he does no moon-shining around here when he gets well."

"What are you grumbling about?" cried the old man, testily. "The gentleman isn't heavy, and your hands are not soft and white as his, that you need fear a bit of work."

Something very like an imprecation burst from Phil's lips, and there was a look in his eyes at that moment not good to see.

Pierce Dudley had fallen into good hands, however, for Mrs. Jenkins, with the interest women always take in a handsome stranger, took to him at once.

The best room was put in order for him; but when Mrs. Jenkins had worked over him for two hours, and did not succeed in bringing the life back to his chilled veins, she grew frightened.

"I am afraid we shall never be able to bring him to!" she exclaimed. "I don't believe in doctors, though. I'm as good as any one of them."

But when the stranger's life was despaired of, she was glad enough to call in a doctor.

"You ought to have sent for me long ago," said the physician. "His condition is, to say the least, alarming. If it does not cost him his life altogether, it will cost him the loss of his limbs, I fear."

Dudley, who was groaning intensely, caught the remark, and a deep curse, that fairly astonished the good woman, broke from his lips.

"Don't tell me that!" he cried, fiercely. "I'd rather be dead than live to face such a terrible fate as that. The very contemplation of it makes me almost go mad. You'd better kill me at once."

At that moment there was a little cry from the doorway. The girl, Lina Meadows, who had discovered Dudley, thereby saving his life, came hurriedly into the room, exclaiming with a piteous quaver in her voice:

"Oh, do not let him die, doctor! Save him, save him!"

Dudley raised himself on his elbow and looked at the pretty creature.

She came up to the couch with faltering footsteps, and threw herself on her knees, great tears, streaming down her cheeks as she repeated over and over again:

"You must not let him die, doctor!"

Even in the midst of his sufferings, his ruling passion—mad infatuation for a new and pretty face—was still strong within Dudley.

For a moment he almost forgot his terrible pain.

"You are good to take such profound interest in me," he said, with a flush, his voice sounding very musical.

"I cannot help it, sir," she said, with a child-like frankness that touched Dudley's heart strangely; "because—because I—I—found you this morning lying on the sands nearly dead; and I have told myself ever since that, if you lived, it would be because I had crossed your path, and rescued you."

"I could not owe my life to one to whom I could be more grateful," he responded, with a touch of his old gallantry.

Then a spasm of pain crossed his face, and, white and motionless, he fell back on his pillow. The effort to talk had been too much for him.

"I will come again to-morrow," said Lina, as Mrs. Jenkins hurried her out of the room, noting the look of rage on her son's face, who was standing at the window, gazing moodily out.

It had just occurred to her that her son Philip, who loved Lina very dearly, although he had never told the girl so, was bitterly chagrined over the scene he was witnessing.

Lina walked home slowly, but somehow it seemed to her that she almost lived in a new world since early morning. Her mother met her at the door.

"What has kept you so late, my child!" she asked, in a tone of wonderful relief. "I have been greatly frightened about you."

"I have so much to tell you, mother!" cried

the girl, breathlessly, flinging herself down on the nearest chair.

"I hope nothing has happened at your business," remarked Mrs. Meadows, nervously.

"No, it is not that," said Lina.

"Is it about Philip Jenkins?" asked her mother, with a merry twinkle in her eye.

The girl's lip curled scornfully, and her bright brown eyes flashed.

"I wish you would not mention that awkward country fellow to me!" she exclaimed, with a touch of anger in her voice. "I have always hated him, and I hate him still more so now. But about the news, mother: surely what I have to tell you will sound to your ears like a romance such as we read of in novels." And in a graphic manner the girl proceeded to give her mother a full résumé of the event that had transpired that morning. "Oh, he is so handsome!" she cried. "He has a face like the picture on the wall there of handsome Sir Lancelot; and, oh! he has the sweetest voice in the world, and the loveliest black eyes you ever saw; they are just like velvet—so large, so dark, so soft-looking. He is the grandest gentleman I ever saw. Ah! I could not describe him to you, mother!"

Mrs. Meadows listened curiously.

"Of course I am glad you saved the young man's life, Lina," she commented; "but, above all things, I hope you are not going to fall in love with him. You do not know who or what he is. Perhaps he may have a dozen sweethearts here, there, and everywhere; and besides, Philip Jenkins has already spoken for you, you know."

Lina threw back her curly head with a gesture of disdain that a queen might have envied.

"Philip Jenkins!" she repeated, scornfully.

"It is almost an insult to speak of him as a suitor for my hand, mother. I was intended for a lady. Don't you remember when I had my fortune told by the gipsy-girl down on the beach? She said: 'You are intended for a fine lady, miss. The lines of your life run long. You are to meet a handsome young man, and he is to fall violently in love with you and ask you to marry him. The marriage will be a magnificent affair—the envy of all the young girls whom you now know. A grand carpet shall be spread from the carriage to the church, and little children will fling roses under your feet as you and your grand husband pass by. Oh, the grand silks and laces and diamonds you will have; and your fine young husband will adore you!' Surely no lassie ever had so fine a fortune, and all for two silver shillings."

"But you remember how angry she got," returned the mother, with a laugh, "when she found that you had only a shilling in your pocket, and declared that you needn't hold your head so high after all, for she hadn't told you the rest of your fortune—that the dark storm-clouds lay back of the sunshine—that the handsome young husband would prove untrue—"

"That the storm would outrun the sunshine for you, and for crossing Fate's path you would certainly rue."

"Oh, she only gave me a bad fortune at last out of spite," returned Lina, "and to terrify me into giving her more money! I had it about me."

"She has not proven herself so bad a prophetess, after all, in a good many things she told the rest of the girls at the factory," returned her mother, with a sage nod of her head, "and well you know it, Lina. But there is one thing I warn you against, and that is, don't fall in love with this handsome stranger over at the tavern. When he gets well he will go his way and you will never see him again."

She saw the colour fade from the girl's pretty face. Lina gave a slight start.

"Ah, me! how dreary life, and her work, day in and day out at the factory, would be to her if a cruel fate should decree that he was to go away soon—that she should never see him again!"

Like all girls, she believed that her first lover, Philip Jenkins, would prove her last and only chance, and she was thinking seriously of encouraging him, when this new and grander star rose on the horizon, putting all thoughts of Philip to flight.

She had lived an age, it seemed to her, in that one day.

Lina had had the loveliest day-dreams of a pair of dark, wonderful eyes, a handsome young husband, silks and diamonds, a carriage bringing her to the church, and all the girls in the factory, who were at that moment around her, almost dying with envy as they stood amidst the throng and watched her ride by.

Oh, golden day-dreams, they were worth whole years of a maiden's life!

CHAPTER LIX.

"I beg you to open the door," repeated Mrs. Morris. "I have something which I must say to you," and most reluctantly Mildred turned the key in the lock and opened the door.

Mrs. Morris was frightened at the white, despairing face and the red swollen eyes that greeted her.

She took Mildred's hand and gently led her to the sofa, and seated herself beside the girl.

Mildred seemed in no hurry to break the silence that fell between them.

"No doubt you will wish to know how Miss Barton's illness has progressed, Mildred!" she said, gravely.

"Yes," returned the girl, in a low voice, that had a sound of dull pain in it.

"Miss Barton is beyond all suffering—she is dead. The effect of the bullet-wound proved fatal at last."

Mrs. Morris never forgot to her dying day the look of horror that swept over the girl's face. She tried to speak, but no words came from her anguished lips; but the awful woe from the great dark eyes was more pitiful than any words could have been.

"Dead!" she gasped at length. "Oh, Heaven, it cannot be! How could the sun shine and the world go on the same if she lay dead!"

Mrs. Morris could not find it in her heart to repeat the terrible words—that she was accused of her death.

No, Mildred must not hear those words from her lips. Gregor Thorpe must tell her them himself, and explain to her her terrible danger.

Mildred was pacing the floor by this time, uttering the most piercing sobs and moans that ever welled up from an agonised heart.

With trembling hands Mildred reached for her bonnet and shawl.

"Where are you going, my dear?" cried Mrs. Morris, anxiously, laying a detaining hand on the girl's arm.

At this juncture she heard Gregor Thorpe's well-known ring at the bell.

He had repented taking leave of Mildred without so much as one word to comfort the wretched girl, and his heart upbraided him so severely that he determined to return and speak at least a few gentle words as an atonement on his part.

As he stood upon the threshold of the door, Mildred attempted to pass him, Mrs. Morris following breathlessly, calling out:

"Oh, Gregor, stop her—stop her, for the love of Heaven!"

He threw out his hand and caught Mildred by the arm.

"You must not leave here," he cried, "for here you are safe!"

She turned her great dark eyes upon him.

"Do not stay my steps!" she cried, with a sorrowful dignity that awed him. "Oh, Heaven! why did I leave my poor little Paula! Let me go to her! I must—I must! I want to kiss those pale, cold lips and kneel down by my darling's side—lay my tired head on her breast and die there!"

The words completely astonished Gregor Thorpe.

"No," he said in a husky voice, "it is too late for that now. She is dead and laid to rest many days."

For an instant the girl seemed scarcely to comprehend what he was saying.

"You do not understand!" she cried, bitterly. "And I may as well own up the truth to you here and now. Paula is—my sister! My place is by her side."

Gregor Thorpe thought that the girl had gone suddenly mad.

He drew her gently but forcibly within the room, closed the door and stood with his back against it.

"I may as well tell you the truth now as at any other time!" cried Mildred, wringing her hands. "The time has come when I must reveal what Paula has kept from you so long, for now she is your wife—nothing can undo that—and you will not part with her for what she has done."

Gregor Thorpe was quite sure now that her brain was turned. She did not seem to realise at all that Paula was dead.

"We must humour her," he said in a low undertone to Mrs. Morris, and the good woman nodded, tears falling like rain from her eyes. "You shall tell us your story, Mildred," he said, leading her to a chair and placing her gently in it. But the girl would not remain seated. She sprang from the seat and paced the floor in the wildest grief that it had ever been his lot to behold.

"I will tell you in a few words the whole story from beginning to end, and then you will not find it in your hearts to keep me from her one single moment."

Then standing before him, with tears streaming from her dark eyes, and her hands clasped supplicatingly before her, she told him the whole pitiful story—the story that almost took his breath away as he listened, stunned and horrified, carrying conviction with every word.

In a low, sobbing voice she told him the piteous tale of her early home-life, in which her mother, Paula, and herself had had such a bitter fight to keep the wolf from the door. Of how she and her mother had toiled, and how they had saved Paula—fair, beautiful Paula—from coming in contact with even the slightest toll that could take the lily whiteness from those soft white hands, or cause the rose to fade from crimson cheek and lip; of how the mother failed in health, and Paula was obliged to take on her shoulders part of the burden of support.

"But, ah! work was not for her. Heaven had intended her for a lady. You know what happened after that, Mr. Thorpe—how our Paula was lost one night—for that was what led to my meeting you. Although she had been employed in your factory, you did not know her; her face was not familiar to you."

During this recital, Gregor Thorpe tried to speak, but his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth.

"You remember the search you made for her," continued Mildred, "and how even I had given her up for lost, and how I mourned her for many a long and weary hour. It was at that time my bitterest woe, for my heart was breaking over it—yes, my poor heart was slowly but surely breaking over it. You know the position that you found for me—as cashier in that emporium. It was there that the greatest shock of my life came to me. I heard on all sides of me of the great beauty of a young and lovely lady whom society idolised, and whose every wish was gratified as soon as it was made known."

"They called her the granddaughter of the great Mr. Barton."

"They went in raptures over her babyish blue eyes, the sheen of her golden hair, and the dimples that played in her rose-leaf cheeks. They worshipped her so much that they would have felt honoured to have kissed the hem of her garments as she passed them by."

"Yes, I felt a curiosity to see this lovely girl of whom I had heard so much. At last the opportunity presented itself."

"I heard them say one to the other: 'See, here is Miss Barton! If she were living in olden times the beauty of Cleopatra or Helen of Troy would have paled before her, as the stars grow dim before the great dazzling light of the sun. Oh, but she is gloriously fair!'"

"I pressed forward eagerly to look at her. One glance and I thought my very soul would leave my body."

"Was I mad or dreaming? It was the face, the voice of Paula, who they had told me was lost—lay drowned in the depths of the sea."



"OH, WHAT CAN BE THE MATTER! I MUST SUMMON HELP AT ONCE!" THE GIRL CRIED.

"I called her, but there was no recognition in her face.

"I do not know you," she said, with a haughty stare; and she swept to her carriage and out of my sight, leaving me dazed, benumbed, out of horror-struck for words.

"That episode was the cause of my receiving my discharge from the firm.

"When they called upon me to answer as to what I meant by so wild an action and so amazing an accusation, I could not speak.

"That night I received a long, strange letter from Paula, a letter that froze the blood in my heart.

"I could not give you the full résumé of all that letter contained. It told of how fate had spared her from a watery grave; how she had lain a fortnight ill unto death, making her way to our old home only to find it scattered to the four winds of the earth; our mother no more, and I gone none knew whither.

"No wonder the poor child was almost mad with grief and terror.

"At that moment—surely the darkest in her life—a strange temptation came to her. While she was wandering homeless, friendless, penniless in the streets of London, the darkness of night coming on, she encountered a woman who caught her as she fell fainting on the pavement.

"This woman took her to her home. While recovering there from her nervous shock, a plan was unfolded to Paula's innocent ears that fairly turned the girl's brain, and no wonder, for it brought with it the promise of wealth and grandeur that a princess might envy—a life of ease. She would never know poverty again.

"The woman proposed to Paula to take the place of an heiress whose death was a secret to the stern old grandfather who had for long years neglected the girl and had at last sent for her.

"The woman who had been the nurse of the poor young heiress, declared to her that the grandfather would never know the difference

between the dead girl and her living counterpart.

"Oh! do not blame Paula, I again beseech you, for yielding to this terrible temptation. Surely she had nothing to lose, but everything to gain.

"She was brought to Mr. Barton. He never dreamed of questioning the truth of her claim upon him.

"And all this Paula wrote me in that letter, begging me for the love of Heaven not to claim her as her sister, for then the whole story would come out. She would be thrown from affluence and wealth to the direst poverty, and she could never endure that.

"Besides, there was another reason, she wrote, and these were her words:

"I have a lover, Mildred, and my lover—Gregor Thorpe—would hate me if he knew the depth of my horrible sin and deceit. I love you, dear Mildred, even though I implore you not to come near me or reveal our kinship by word or sign—I still love you as fondly as in the dear old days of the past. You will not hurl me down to poverty. You will not see the man whom I love drift from me!"

"My lips were mute, my heart was colder than a stone—I could not betray her. Then came the hour in which you came to me and asked to be released from your betrothal vow, giving as a reason your love for another, and that other the beautiful heiress, Miss Barton. You remember how I gave you up mutely to her, making no outcry against Heaven; but only the angels knew how bitterly hard it was for me to bear it and live. Then the crowning event came; she was ill, and you called upon me to nurse your promised bride. You marvelled much that I went so willingly and took such an unusual interest in her.

"You never knew—how could you!—what she was to me. Despite her taking you from me, I loved her better than I did my own life. I would have given the last drop of blood in my

heart if I could have bought her happiness, even at so great a cost.

"I did not tell her what you had been to me, as you accused me of doing. Had I done so, she would have given you up, and that would have broken her heart and yours, and made me but the more miserable.

"I remained with her up to the hour when she was to become your bride; then I wandered away, little caring whither I went. You know the rest that has happened; and now you tell me that I must not go and see my darling—that she for whom I would have given my very life is dead! I will go to her—my place is by her side. I want to kneel down by her side and pray her to plead with the angels to send for me. Life is too hard, too bitter, and the world too cold!"

(To be continued.)

The orchid, found in the jungles and difficult of access, sometimes commands £200 for a single specimen. It takes months to stalk the "demon flowers."

"REMEMBRANCE," and "The Old Fiddler," are the titles of two new songs just published by Mr. Thomas Holloway. Lovers of music will find in "Remembrance" (words by Oxenford, music by Louis Le Keux) a song delightfully simple and beautifully pathetic alike in composition and melody, and in "The Old Fiddler," (words by Edward Oxenford, music by Arthur C. Colborn) the popular writer and composer have excelled themselves in a production at once lively, plaintive and stirring. We venture to predict a successful run on these Gems of Music when we call the attention of our readers to the fact that although published at 2s. each, they can be obtained by sending direct to THOMAS HOLLOWAY, 78, New Oxford Street, W., and mentioning this paper, post-free for 2½d. each in stamps, or 51. the two.



LILLIAN DREW A CHAIR UP TO THE FIRE, AND THE LITTLE ONES CLUSTERED ROUND HER.

NAMELESS.

—101—

CHAPTER XIV.

It seemed to Lillian, when Guy Ainslie had left her, that the bitterness of death itself was at her heart.

He had been so nobly generous to her. She honoured him as the ideal of all that was good and true, and he had turned against her.

Through all her fears of Sir Ronald, she had clung to the hope that Mr. Ainslie would defend her—that he would not utterly desert her however he must condemn her.

An hour passed.

Lillian went upstairs and bathed her throbbing brow with fresh cold water. She felt refreshed, and went back to the schoolroom with a pretty trifle of fancy-work in her hand. A servant met her on the threshold. My lady was asking for her; would she go at once to the drawing-room?

A little surprised, since Lady Dacres rarely evinced any desire for her society, Lillian obeyed. She found her employer seated in her own peculiar easy-chair. Her mouth was hard and set; there was a cold, cruel sparkle in her eyes.

Lillian's heart failed as she noticed it. Full well she knew that Vivian had never liked her—that her mercy could be very cruel.

"I have sent for you, Miss—Green," with a very perceptible pause before the latter word—began my lady, in her clear, ringing voice, "to tell you that a train leaves Chesham at two o'clock. I have ordered the dog-cart in an hour's time, when I hope you will be ready to leave the Castle."

Lillian's blue eyes fixed themselves on Vivian's with a piteous entreaty.

Oh, what a difference in the fate of these two women! Both were young—neither had reached the age of twenty—and both had more than a common share of beauty; but here all resemblance ceased.

Lillian was alone and desolate—poor and friend-

less. Vivian was a good man's honoured wife; wealthy and respected—courted and admired.

"I do not understand!" said Lillian, faintly. "How have I been so unfortunate as to displease you?"

"You have deceived me from the first minute of entering my house!"

No answer.

"Can you deny it? You were the affianced wife of a gentleman of high family."

"You mean Sir Ronald Trevlyn?"

"I do. When he discovered the shameful fraud practised on him—when he learned a nameless outcast had been represented to him as Miss Earl—though the blow was a cruel one, he resolved to do his duty. He judged you were to be pitied; he offered to marry you."

Lillian's hands were clasped; never before had she quite realized how black a list of crimes could be laid to her charge.

"You agreed—you sent him away accepting his sacrifice! But you had heard a rumour of his entanglements; you were playing for a high stake. You allowed everybody to believe you dead! Under a false name you obtained the sympathy of my cousin—Miss Ainslie—and entered my house!"

"Lady Dacres," said the governess, with a strange, sad dignity, "I own that I came here under an assumed name; but I have no other sin against you to reproach myself with. I have faithfully done my duty."

"Your duty!" scornfully. "Was it your duty to flirt with every guest who came here—to play with the heart of a generous gentleman like Mr. Darby? To strive to seduce Sir Ronald from his allegiance to Miss Cash?—to even attempt to poison the minds of Sir John and his children against myself? If all this was your duty, you have done it faithfully!"

"Indeed—indeed, I am innocent!" cried the poor girl. "Lady Dacres, have pity on me! I have no home—no friends! Let me stay with your little step-children. I will promise you never to leave the schoolroom—never to converse

with any of your guests, if only you will let me stay!"

In her agitation she had grasped Lady Dacres's dress with her thin white hand. My lady drew it indignantly away.

"I am quite resolved."

"Have pity!" pleaded Lillian. "I am so young—so friendless! Lady Dacres, you are motherless like me! For your dead mother's sake, have mercy!"

"No!"

Once more Lillian tried to move her.

"Think of the disgrace that must fall upon me if you dismiss me thus!"

"You should have thought of all that before," returned my lady.

"Who will take me into their family when they hear of how you sent me away?"

"No one of common sense. But you need not despair; you are quite sufficiently conscious of your own attractions to turn them to good account. There are plenty of men in the world foolish enough to forgive anything for the sake of a pretty baby-face."

She put a little heap of sovereigns on the table—the quarter's salary not yet due. Lillian took it, sadly; then, without a word, she went out from the presence of my Lady Dacres.

Two girls; one had broken her plighted troth, and well-nigh blighted her lover's life. She had cast home, faith, and duty to the winds, and she was the darling of Belgravia, the favourite of the county. The other had done nothing save conceal a painful episode of her own life—nothing in the world, and her reward was to be expelled like a thief and a felon!

Lillian went upstairs and began her simple preparations, the maid who usually waited on her assisting; the girl's eyes were red, for she loved the young governess dearly.

"You will give my love to the children," said Lillian, with a choked sob. "Oh, how I should have liked to say good-bye to them!"

"I'll remember, miss," said the maid, warmly. "I only wish Sir John and my lady had stayed

up in London. We were very happy without them."

The two o'clock train came rattling into Chapsow Station, and Lillian took her place in a second-class carriage. She would gladly have travelled third, only that the train was not intended for economical passengers, and so the cheapest class of carriage was not there. She felt as the engine tore them rapidly onward that another page in her chequered life was over.

There was only one other occupant of the carriage, a girl who might have been five or six years Lillian's senior; she was not beautiful, or even pretty, but there was a strange, nameless charm about her face; and poor, sorrowful Lillian thought she would have given anything to have had her for a friend.

"I am quite sure you are in trouble," said Mary Grant, at last, bending forward on a sudden impulse, and taking Lillian's hand, "will you tell me if I can help you?"

The first words unlocked the flood-gates of Lillian's tears; they streamed down her face as she answered no one could help her.

"You are going to London?"

"Yes."

"To friends?"

"I have no friends; I am alone in the world. I was governess at Lady Dacres, and she has sent me away!"

A light broke upon the other's face.

"I used to know Lady Dacres very well before her marriage. I don't think your falling to please her means quite that you will never please anyone. She is very beautiful, but she is capricious."

Lillian's eyes endorsed this.

"I never meant to vex her," she said eagerly.

"I did my best, indeed I did!"

"And you are Lillian Green. I have often heard of you."

"Have you really?"

"Yes. Can't you guess from whom?"

"I have no idea."

"From my own brother. Archie is very dear to me; and I know he would like us two to be friends. Yes," as the blushes deepened on Lillian's face, "I know that you have refused him—that you have said you can never be his wife; but, for all that, I should like to help you for his sake."

"He was so kind to me!" sobbed Lillian. "Oh, Miss Darby, I wish I had never been born; I bring nothing but trouble to every one!"

"Hush! you must not say that; and I am not Miss Darby. My name is Grant, and I have been married several years. I am going home now to my little children, and I think you had better come with me. Yes," as Lillian's lips moved, "I do, indeed; you are too young and pretty to be alone in London. Never mind telling me why Lady Dacres sent you away. I know a little of her; and I think it would take a great deal to make me believe evil of the girl my brother loves."

Lillian clung to her in grateful gladness; at the time when she had felt most desolate help had come.

Mrs. Grant chartered a cab at Paddington Station, and they drove quickly to a small, cheerful house in Kensington. Little children stood watching at the windows, and before the travellers could alight, little feet were clattering in the hall, and eager voices called "Mamma."

Mrs. Grant kissed them fondly; but with a half sigh, as though some other welcome than theirs was needed to complete her joy, and she asked the servant hurriedly,—

"Is the Indian man in?"

"No ma'am."

The sweet face looked disappointed; but she showed Lillian to a pretty spare room without a word of grief; and it was only from the little girl who elected to stay with Miss Green that the news came.

"Papa was out in India; he had been gone a long time; but oh, he was coming back soon!"

"And what are you going to do?" This question came when Lillian had been at Kensington more than a week; when gentle Mrs. Grant knew the whole history of the girl's life.

"I do not know."

"I think I can tell you. I have an old friend,

whom I have known all my life; she is very much alone, and she needs a companion. Lady Leigh is so rich that the question of salary need not trouble you. She lives so quietly that you need never fear meeting any one who knows the Dacres. If all you need is a quiet place, where you can rest from the worries and troubles of your life, I am quite sure you will be happy with the Countess."

"I am sure I shall. Oh, Mrs. Grant, how good you are to me!"

"Am I? It is not the future I would rather arrange for you. Lillian, ever since I saw you I have quite understood my brother's infatuation. Dear me, are you quite sure you cannot be my sister?"

"I am quite sure."

"And yet I should have thought Archie a man to win any girl's heart."

"Ay, if it were to be won!"

"You mean that yours is not! Oh! Lillian, you cannot be grieving for Sir Ronald!"

"Oh, no!"

"For whom then, child? If you have a lover and quarrelled with him, don't you think you are spoiling both your lives? Lillian, I am sure you were never meant to lead a lonely life."

"You don't understand."

"Make me understand, dear."

"You will think so badly of me."

"Never."

"I love him so," said the girl, with a sort of sob. "You see, he came to me when things were at their darkest, he trusted me; he was so noble, so generous, I learned to love him almost without knowing it."

"And he?"

"He never loved me—never; but I think he liked me until I told him how I had deceived his cousin. He said, then, my life had been a living lie. Oh, Mrs. Grant, when I touched his arm and prayed of him to forgive me, he shook my hand off as though it had been a serpent."

"That is not like Guy Ainslie!"

"Guy Ainslie?"

"My dear, you say he was Lady Dacres' cousin—of course you mean Mr. Ainslie. He is quite fit to be a young girl's hero. I understand the whole story—except his being stern with you. I should have thought him full of pity for a lonely girl like you!"

Lillian shook her head.

"He is so good himself he could not bear with my folly."

"Well, the next time I see him I shall give him a piece of my mind. Now, my dear, will you come with me to call on Lady Leigh?"

They found the Countess alone, looking very sad and troubled.

Mrs. Grant at once introduced the subject of her errand. To her surprise the Countess asked, abruptly—

"Is Miss Green related to the Costillons?"

"No; she is an orphan with no family ties."

"She reminds me of the family very much. Ah, you are too young to remember them, Mary, but they all had those dark blue eyes. I should not like to receive any one into my house who claimed kindred with the Costillons. They have been the cause of much sorrow to me and mine."

"There is no one in all the world with whom I can claim kindred, Lady Leigh," said Lillian, earnestly.

"And your age?"

She heard it, still with that puzzled look upon her face.

"It is strange how strongly you resemble the Costillons!"

Lillian began to fear her blue eyes would lose her the post of Lady Leigh's companion; but Mrs. Grant, with admirable tact, led the conversation to another subject, and before they left it was quite settled that her protégée should take up her abode at Eaton-square the following week.

"I am very glad you will be there, dear," she said, stroking the girl's soft, bright hair. "That is such a desolate home in spite of all its grandeur, and I think you will bring a little sunshine into it."

"I will try. Is Lady Leigh a widow?"

"Ay, and well-nigh childless. She has one son—the present Earl; but though they live together there is a great gulf between them. No one knows exactly how it arose, but Lord Leigh was always one apart from his family. He served in India for years in the same regiment as my father. No one expected he would come into the title. I remember so well the first time we met him afterwards, and my husband congratulated him. He smiled the saddest smile I ever saw, and said his honours had come too late."

"Is he so old?"

"He is in the prime of life, but he has had some hidden care."

"Poor man!"

"Ay, brighten his path if you can, Lillian. I fear his home is very dreary; and though he is reported to be the most fascinating man in London, your heart will be in no danger."

"Oh, no," half sadly; "but Lady Leigh may not like me to entertain her son."

"Lady Leigh would like anything that brought a smile to Gerald's face. I will leave you at home now, Lillian, for I have some other places to go to."

The day came for Lillian to leave the cheerful home at Kensington, but she had none of the fears which had assailed her on going to Chapsow.

Eaton-square was not far from Kensington. Mrs. Grant was a favourite friend of the Countess. Surely she and Lillian would meet sometimes!

One trouble she had, indeed, which she could never quite forget.

Guy Ainslie had lost his faith in her, the man to whom she had given her whole heart despoiled her, and thought her a "living lie."

There were times when poor Lillian would have given years from her life for one sight of Guy Ainslie's face, for one kind word from his lips.

The Countess received her very kindly; and it seemed that her duties would be very easy ones—to read to Lady Leigh, to dine with her, and to sing to her in the twilight seemed the chief of them.

Before a week had passed the Countess had grown to love the fair sweet face, and to welcome it with delight.

"It is just as though you were my grandchild," she said one day, fondly. "Do you know, dear, except my son, I have not a relation in the world!"

"Is Lord Leigh abroad?"

"He is in Scotland. Gerald is always travelling about somewhere. He cannot rest."

"Not even in this beautiful home?"

"Here least of all. He is all I have left in the world, and yet he hates me."

"Oh, surely not!"

"Well, he can never forgive me,"—the old lady's voice sank to a whisper. "I wronged him cruelly, Lillian, but it was nearly twenty years ago. He might forgive me now when I am old and feeble, when he knows I have not long to live."

And still the days passed and the Earl did not come; still his mother longed and waited for his presence.

"It is no use," she said one day, turning away from the window with a sigh; "he keeps away from his home just because I am here. He will not forgive me even when I am dying!"

She had been very illing the last few days. The doctors had frankly told Lillian she wanted rousing and cheering; and so at last, touched by that yearning lament, Lillian forgot all ceremony, all shyness. She sat down one evening and wrote to the Earl.

It was a very simple note, and she did not even sign it. She forgot that it was going to a powerful nobleman. She wrote as plainly as though he had been a working-man. She told him his mother's illness increased from day to day, that she fretted continually over his absence, and she begged him to come home while the Countess was yet strong enough to rejoice over his presence.

"Hem! the new companion, I suppose," was the Earl's comment. "A pretty hand enough" slipping the note into his pocket. "Well, it is a lady's letter, and well expressed, but it's a great

liberty to write to a man of my age and tell him he's neglecting his duty. I suppose Miss Green, as the Countess calls her, is strong-minded, and thinks it her province to go about informing the world."

So he put the note aside, and tried to cast it from his thoughts, but he could not quite forget the simple words of entreaty; and so the third week in December, when the nights were cold and frosty, he drew up in a cab before the familiar house in Eaton-square as naturally as though he had left it only the day before.

"How is my mother, Popham?" he asked the butler.

"My lady is better, my lord; she is in the boudoir with Miss Green."

"Miss Green?"

"My lady's companion," explained Popham; "she has been here ever since the autumn, my lord."

"Ah, and my mother likes her!"

The butler was an old servant, and a privileged person. He rubbed his hands as though to give more emphasis to his speech.

"It is my belief, my lord, the Countess could not think more of Miss Green if she were her own daughter!"

The Earl went to his own room; he changed his travelling clothes for an evening suit, and then presented himself at the boudoir-door, quite ready to behold a tall, angular female with a depressing face and great powers of governing.

He was mistaken—his mother was alone; and very—very warm was the welcome he received.

"I have wanted you so, Gerald!"

"You know, mother, I am of a restless nature, and—"

"You might come home sometimes!"

"What is there to make home attractive to me?"

"Oh, Gerald, if only you could forget. If only you would set time heal your sorrow. You are young yet! The loveliest girls in London would not refuse you. You might have a happy home—a loving wife to-morrow if you pleased!"

"And I do not please! I prefer to be faithful to a memory!"

"It is not natural!"

"Perhaps not!"

"The best loved wives are forgotten in twenty years."

"You don't understand!" he cried, impatiently. "If my darling had died in my arms—if I had received her parting words, and kissed her cold dead lips, I should have felt differently. I should have known then all that was possible had been done. I should have known she had felt no pang, I could have spared her. As it is her face is ever before me! I have travelled far and wide since I became Lord Leigh. I have mixed in the gayest society of London and foreign cities. I have seen everything most beautiful in art and nature, and do you think I have forgotten my wife? I can see her face before me now as plainly as though we had parted but yesterday."

The Countess felt a new perplexity. If this was so—if his heart had never swerved from its fidelity—how would he bear to see day by day a face which was his dead wife's image? If she who had known but little of Miss Costillon had been struck by Lillian's speaking likeness, how would it be with the husband whose heart still ached for his loss?

"And so you have set up a companion, mother?"

"Yes," timidly. "Mary Grant recommended her to me. I have been thinking, Gerald, I might give her a holiday now you are come. I must have kept her had I been alone."

The Earl felt a kind of relief at the prospect of not meeting his mistress, and he readily agreed.

The Countess, who feared the very sight of Lillian would drive him from his home, proposed to her favourite that very evening that she should go to spend her Christmas with the Grants.

"Mary wrote to invite you only yesterday," she said, pleasantly. "Send her a line to say you will be there to-morrow."

"But you will be so lonely!"

"I have Gerald, dear. With my boy at home I can spare even you."

And so Lillian found it of no avail to protest any longer; and the next day, without even a sight of the Earl of whom she had heard so much, the golden-haired companion was driven in my lady's own carriage to the house of her friend.

She reached there just at dusk.

"Mother was out," the children told her, but they made her take off her things; and then, drawing a chair to the fire, the little ones clustered round her.

They had loved her very dearly when she was staying with them, and partly because their mother did not like to bear her called "Miss Green"—partly from the desire of their little affectionate hearts—they called her by the name which would have been hers had she married Archibald Darby—aunt.

A very pretty picture they made sitting in the firelight; the flames falling full on Lillian's golden hair and the innocent, childish faces. They were in the drawing-room, which was not a stiff, formal apartment, but the evening resort of the family. Visitors were always shown in there; so when an old family friend, whom the page knew quite well, his mistress would be sorry to miss, presented himself, he was asked to wait.

"Mrs. Grant can't be long, sir. The children are in the drawing-room."

Guy Ainslie knew the little Grants well. True, he had not seen them since his summer visit to Castle Dacres, but their memories would be long enough not to have forgotten him.

"I'll go and wait in the drawing-room."

The page held the door open. Guy advanced. He saw a group gathered in the firelight. Then he almost recoiled.

Its centre was the girl who had told him with her own lips she had deceived him—who had admitted she was a sinner.

Well, she did not look a sinner now. Not one of the little children who clung to her so affectionately had a face more full of innocence. As beautiful as when he saw her at Castle Dacres, and yet with that strange shadow of pain upon her brow, was the girl whose fate had haunted him these last autumn weeks.

She saw him, and she grew white as death. Then the children recognised their friend and clambered round him.

"Mother's out! This is auntie—she's come for Christmas. She tells such splendid stories!"

"Auntie!" It went to Guy's heart.

Of course all these months he had known quite well that she was lost to him, that she could never be anything in his life, and yet it made her seem ten times farther off to learn she belonged to another.

"You took my advice then," he said, coldly.

"I do not understand you!"

The children were there, and busy making a dozen remarks on their own account. They never heard these brief sentences.

"You know what that child called you just now?"

"Yes."

"And my advice to you was to bear that title—to let their uncle marry you."

"Was it?"

He little knew the effort it was to her to keep so calm.

"Of course it was. Archibald seems to have deserted me; he never sent me wedding cards."

This was intelligible to the children.

"Uncle Archie isn't married!" they cried with one voice; and then, hearing their mother's knock, they scuttled downstairs to tell her of the two arrivals.

"What does it mean?" Guy asked, in a strange, hard voice.

"It means," answered Lillian, trying to speak firmly, "that Mrs. Grant is my dear friend, and her children have chosen me as an adopted relation."

"Oh!"

"Their mother knows all," said Lillian, simply. "I have not deceived her."

"And she says?"

"She thinks I was more sinned against than

sinning. She thinks that, having no true name of my own, that being friendless and alone, I was not to blame for keeping my sad history a secret. She says I was not bound to tell Lady Dacres that from being a rich man's adopted child I became through his sudden death, lonely and nameless."

"Was that your secret?" cried Guy, in a dazed voice. "Was that what you meant when you said you had deceived me?"

"That, and that only! I know it was very wicked; but, oh, the temptation was cruel, I never realised how much I had sinned till our last conversation at the Castle, when you judged me so harshly."

"I was a fool," he cried, bitterly.

"Nay, all you said was true, only it hurt me so."

"You cared a little then for my opinion?"

"I cared too much, I am afraid," she said, gravely; "you had been very, very kind to me."

"I was under a great mistake," he replied, gravely. "I have wronged you cruelly in my thoughts. Do you think you can ever forgive me? I am sure you would if you knew how your fate has haunted me all these weeks."

"I have been well and happy."

"And you forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive. I know, to anyone just and upright as you are, I must have seemed very wicked."

"Wicked!" said Guy, musingly—"wicked with those eyes. How could I ever have thought that?"

"You won't think so any more," pleaded the girl gently. "For the sake of all the kindness you have shown me long ago you will let us be friends!"

"Never while I live," cried Guy Ainslie, passionately; and then, before poor Lillian had time to recover from the shock of this cruel speech, Mrs. Grant entered, full of kindly welcome to her visitors, and apologies for her absence.

(To be continued.)

AN UNFORTUNATE RESEMBLANCE.

—101—

(Continued from page 103.)

Of course it was that, and yet, as he held the delicate bit of cambric in his hand, a faint, indescribable perfume came from it that reminded him of Nesta. Indeed, so strong was the feeling, so peculiar the sensation, that he looked up suddenly, almost expecting to see her at his side. But no. There was nothing save the grey, moss-grown walls, and the blank, frowning casements, and telling himself angrily that he was a fool, he went moodily home, and, lighting a pipe, flung himself into a chair, and tried to interest himself in the *Field*.

Perhaps he would not have lounged in his easy chair, in that indolent and indifferent fashion, could he have heard a conversation that was going on between Mrs. Derwent and Eardly Walshe in the drawing-room at the Royal, at that minute.

She sat on a couch in a negligently graceful attitude, attired in a most becoming gown of crepe and silk, for already she had thrown off some of her heavy mourning, looking very handsome, and very well satisfied with herself. He stood before the fire, one foot on the fender, a lowering look in his sinister eyes, a black frown on his swarthy brow.

"Well, Betty," he was saying in an angry, yet strangely familiar tone. "Are you going to give me an answer?"

"What answer?" she asked indifferently, smoothing the costly lace at her breast.

"The definite answer that I require."

"About what?" she demanded coolly.

"You know what I mean," he returned with visible and unrestrained annoyance.

"No, I don't," she contradicted.

"That is not the truth," he rejoined, quickly and hotly.

"You are hardly polite, my friend," she expostulated, with a little exasperating smile.

"If I'm not, the fault is yours. You know I love you, and you nearly drive me mad."

"Then why put yourself in the way of having your mental faculties deranged?" she remarked, with the utmost calmness.

"You know I can't help myself," he said, almost savagely.

"Can't you really?" mockingly.

"You know I love you," he went on, "and —"

"Say rather you love the money of which I am now mistress," she retorted, tauntingly.

"Of which your daughter is mistress," he rejoined, pointedly.

"My daughter is *non compos*," Mrs. Derwent affirmed, languidly, "therefore I manage her estates and affairs generally."

"Subject to one thing," he put in.

"Subject to no thing!" she said, quickly and haughtily.

"You forget, Betty, that I have something to say in the matter."

"I forget nothing."

"I am surprised to hear you say so, as you seem to me to have an extremely convenient memory, and to remember only just what suits you. You forget to be even commonly grateful," he added, bitterly.

"You are certainly not yourself, doctor," she smiled, eyeing him fixedly. "Try a brandy-and-soda; it will raise your spirits," waving her hand towards a small table, on which was an array of bottles and tumblers.

"No, thank you, I don't want to muddle my brain to-night. I want to keep clear and cool."

"Indeed!" she remarked, hardly looking well pleased.

"Yes, I mean to have a 'yes' or a 'no' from you now, whether you like it or not," and he laughed, his long nose coming down over his black moustache in anything save a pleasant fashion.

"You are arbitrary, my friend."

"Not at all, Betty, only loving."

"Grasping, you mean," she rejoined, testily.

"That is not fair. Didn't I show you pretty plainly that I cared for you in India, when you had next to nothing a year?"

"You certainly paid me some slight attention," she admitted, with great reluctance.

"Is that what you term it?" he asked, with another descent of his nasal organ.

"Yes, that is what I term it."

"Well, it is not worth while quarrelling about it. What I want to know now is, do you mean to reward me for all I have done for you? Do you, in fact, mean to—marry me?" taking her hand, tenderly, between both his.

"You wish a frank answer?" she asked, some of the rich colour leaving her cheek.

"Most certainly."

"Then—I do not."

"Betty! you can't mean it!"

"I do."

"After all my services?"

"You were paid for them," she said, sullenly withdrawing her hand.

"Two thousand pounds!"

"It is a large sum," declared the lady.

"Very large," he returned, sarcastically; considering your income is six thousand a year, not to speak of diamonds, plate, &c."

"I think I was very liberal."

"And I don't. But for me you would not be in the enjoyment of all these luxuries," waving his hand around.

"Which you wish to share," she sneered.

"I certainly think I have the right to share them."

"And I don't."

"You mean absolutely to refuse me?"

"Yes."

"Your decision is final!"

"Quite final."

"Very well, madam, you will regret this."

"Do your worst," she laughed, defiantly.

"I will, you may be sure."

"I don't fear you."

"You well may."

"You can do no harm."

"I am not so sure of that."

"I am. The likeness was too marked. I am safe."

"I rejoice that you think so. Enjoy your ill-gotten riches while you may," and without another word he turned and left the room.

"I don't fear him," muttered Betty, looking into the glowing fire, meditatively. "He can work me no ill, and soon now I shall have Henry to protect me;" and sinking into her chair she gave herself to the pleasant occupation of building castles in the air, and picturing what she would do when she was Mrs. Henry Fairfield—or her Boulogne acquaintances had proposed, and they were secretly engaged, meaning to marry in a few months, each thinking the other was a great catch; only with her there was a mingling of sentiment with the more sordid feeling, as Fairfield resembled her girlhood's lover.

A few days after this stormy interview between Walshe and Betty Derwent, Guy received a mysterious letter, with neither beginning nor signature, and containing only these words:—

"Guy Chalmers should investigate into the mystery of the occupant of the east wing at Sellyn Royal. The dead sometimes come to life."

Nothing more, but it set the young man's veins gushing and tingling with a new-born hope.

Nesta might still be alive!

Hastily he consulted his father, who was a magistrate; and accompanied by him and a couple of policemen they quietly entered the Royal during Mrs. Derwent's absence, and forced her maid and confidante to give up the keys of the rooms in the east wing.

Reluctantly she delivered it to Guy, who, rushing down the intervening corridors and passages, reached the door of Mary Stuart's gloomy room, and, eagerly inserting the key, flung it wide open.

By the dim light of a shaded lamp he saw a female figure sitting at the table, its head buried in its arms. At the sound of his entry the figure lifted its head, and with an exclamation of unutterable disappointment he turned to go. He had no right to interfere. That pale, pinched face, those wild, dark eyes were—Nesta's, not Nesta's.

As he turned, a cry of anguish rang out.

"Guy, Guy, do you not know me!"

The voice was his lost love's. In another moment she was clasped to his breast, sobbing out her wretchedness and fear in that safe haven.

Confinement and misery had worn her away until she more resembled her unfortunate cousin than her own blooming self.

By degrees, as she became calmer, she told him the whole story. At the beginning of Nella's illness, Mrs. Derwent had hurriedly fetched her from Paris, and under pretence of isolating her, had taken her straight to Nella's room, that unfortunate girl having been put into Nesta's; then she gave out that it was her niece who was ill, and the extraordinary likeness between the cousins favoured the deception.

On the night Nella died, Nesta's wine was drugged, and when she recovered her senses found herself in the gloomy room in the east wing. A letter told her what her fate was to be, and that struggling against it would be useless, as the only person who would see her would be her aunt's maid, who firmly believed she was the mad Nella Derwent.

Of course this plan could never have been carried out without Doctor Walshe's help, and the price to be paid for it was the fair but false Betty's hand. Failing that, he had betrayed his guilty accomplice, and thus Nesta was restored to life and her lover.

When her story was told, Guy, supporting her slender, wasted form, took her back to the west wing, where his father and the policemen were waiting.

Hearing that the guilty woman had returned, they all proceeded to the drawing-room, where the widow stood, a mass of diamonds and rich silks and laces.

She started and turned deadly pale at the

sight of her injured niece, but recovering herself, asked haughtily what they wanted, and how they dared interfere with her afflicted child!

"Stop that folly," said Guy, sternly: "you cannot blind the eyes of love. I know that this is Nesta, my own beloved one—not Nella—and what we want is to tell you to go."

"I will not," she said, haughtily.

"You will," he rejoined, coldly and pitilessly, "and that within the next five minutes, or I hand you over to these men," pointing to the policemen, "and the punishment you so richly deserve. Go!"

For a full moment she stood looking at him defiantly; and then, seeing he meant what he said, and knowing the game was up, and resistance useless, she went slowly past them, out into the darkness of the spring night, and they never saw her again, though they heard that, shabby, wild-eyed, and haggard, she haunted the gaming tables at Monaco and Baden, trying there to recover the fortune she had lost.

A few weeks later the joy bells rang out merrily as Guy and Nesta stood before the altar of the Sellyn Church, while the clergyman read the words that made them man and wife, bound them together by indissoluble ties while their lives should last. When it was over, as they left the church, a ray of bright sunshine fell on the bride's fair orange blossom-crowned head.

"A good omen, love!" whispered her groom.

"I hope so, Guy," she answered, looking up at him with eyes of endless love. "I am superstitious enough to welcome anything of that kind now, after my sorrow and trial."

"Have no care for the future," he murmured. "I will protect you from all harm," and as they went down the path strewn with snowy flowers that the village children tossed at their feet, their eyes turned instinctively to the grey, hoary walls of the Royal, their future home.

[THE END]

FOUND WANTING.

—101—

CHAPTER XXVII.

"You are to be emancipated from this room to-morrow," said Christine, one mild morning in the end of November—a sort of Indian summer they were having—"and I want to know what room you'd like to go into so that I can get there all you'll want."

Delmar hesitated. With the rooms downstairs there were associations he did not care to encounter—already, though he longed for the change, he dreaded this palpable taking up again of the daily life he must lead henceforward.

"You can't decide!" said Christine, with a quick glance at him; "well, then, I will, and you shall come to my sitting-room. It doesn't look on the river, but that doesn't matter, for the river looks dreary just now. The room is on this floor, and there's my piano, and the hills to look at. Don't you consider yourself honoured?"

"Very much, sunbeam."

"Sunbeam!" she repeated with a quick, bright look; "is that my name? I wish I were one, I know what I'd do. I am going now to look after the room."

It looked sunny enough when the next day Delmar came slowly into it, with a curious feeling of strangeness, and coming from one world into another. He did not stay long, getting tired very soon; but notwithstanding all there was to keep him back he grew stronger—youth and a fine constitution would have their way.

Still Christine hesitated and waited before forcing on any explanation. He was not like a man of calm temperament—she had that to consider. But when a week had passed, and Dr. Hall shook his head at wakeful nights, and an utter want of interest in anything, she made up her mind to face the thing out.

One afternoon Delmar came into the room as

usual, and found himself its only occupant, for Christine and Colin were out. Everything was ready placed for him as usual; books within easy reach and his desk also, for which he had asked only that morning, having begun to feel the writer's longing towards paper and pen.

Flowers there were in plenty, and another display in colour in Christine's slippers lying on her low chair in graceful untidiness. Letters, too, some of them business, one from Tom Lonsdale—the first of his he had been allowed to see. He opened it listlessly, and the sight of the handwriting carried him back to the garden at Walton that morning after the squire's party when Tom had said so earnestly,—

"The sort of girl to cling to the man she loves through all manner of evil."

Delmar drew a short sigh, with a whole world of bitterness in it; and then, by a quick connection of ideas turned at once, almost without thought, to the desk, opening it hurriedly. There, as he had last left it, lying with Christine's letter, was the love-gift he had kept only that he might hold to a promise.

The letter he threw from him shudderingly into the fire—the rose he looked at and kissed as a man may a dead face, and put in his breast.

A little later Christine came in, preceded by Colin, who indulged now in decorous roughness about his master, making up for lost time. Christine said a few bright words, and then she sat down, taking up her work, more with the air of a person who seeks relief in employment than of one who has any desire for it for its own sake. Delmar, half sitting, half reclining on the couch opposite, made no effort to talk, but idly caressed the hound, till Colin took it into his head to like the tiger-skin better, and marched off there. Christine understood the let-alone system and, besides, had her own thoughts to absorb her; but her eyes were busily enough concerned with her companion.

Even in health he had never looked handsomer, for there still rested on the clear-cut face, softening and etherealizing it, the shaded, transparent delicacy of illness. The dark lines round the eyes only deepened their colour. But it was a perfectly grave face, with something of sweetness, almost patience, round the mouth. Christine, noting it, felt her heart ache; there must have been so much untold suffering to have brought such a look to the face that had so rarely been swift.

Presently his stillness gave way; he turned abruptly to the table and began to write, but in two minutes tore up the paper and scattered it on the hearth; then he took up a book, a light novel, turned a few pages, and put it back again; then he got up, crossed to the piano, opened it and played a few notes, shutting it hastily, as if he could not bear to be reminded of his loss of power. Next he stood for a minute at the window, looking at the distant hills—that, too, seemed only to give pain, by the sudden way in which he came back to the couch.

Christine did not utter a word, but the beating of her heart seemed to suffocate her. She felt that for both the time had come; but still worked on blindly, unable to decide how to begin what to say—letting the minutes drift on, trusting to impulse or chance to bring about what she desired, as we must do sometimes when we cannot see the way before us.

She knew that presently he took from his desk some drawing-paper and a pencil and began sketching—what, she did not know; the fact of his doing it seemed to put off her chance of speaking. She rose to stir up the fire, taking along time over the operation, considering whether she had not better leave him to himself for a while, and immediately, with utter contradictoriness, came and looked over his drawing.

"What is it?" she said. "A wreath of flowers! How lovely! how exquisitely you are shading them! You never drew flowers before."

"I don't know what put it into my head; watching you do yours when I was ill, I suppose."

"May I have that when it is done? It will make such a perfect design, only you are putting too much work in it."

"I know, you only trace yours."

She knelt down, watching him—growing interested in the work. Then came the impulsive words,—

"Yours is ever so much better than mine—look at the droop of those roses. I shall always make you do my designs!"

Like a flash the hidden, wholly unconscious import of those words struck both simultaneously. The pencil dropped from his fingers, the paper fluttered to the ground; Christine stood up, locking her hands. The next words seemed scarcely her own.

"Albert—husband—you and I—what are we to do with our lives?"

"I don't know—Heaven knows!" he muttered, and his head sank in his hands.

"But we must face it!" she said, in a rapid way; "we cannot go on like this. It is hurting you, and I—I cannot bear it. This miserable constraint—cannot we end it? I am not blaming you—I understand you—I know you have striven—I will go away again."

The shaking voice broke; and he, getting up, crossed to the mantel-piece, and stood there with his face hidden in his folded arms. His silence, his plain shrinking from her were terrible—she came nearer, stretching out her hands with an action of unconscious pathos.

"Alburt, have you no word? Do you doubt me? I forgave all."

"I know—I know! and it kills me—it kills me! All I have done, and you give me life for it—you had better have left me to die! I wish I had been dead before I brought you here! Oh! was I devil or man, to steel myself against you, to fling honour in the dust. I can never get it back!"

"But that is past, forgiven!" she said, tremblingly, with her large pitying eyes watching him, and her breath coming and going in painful throbs! "that is not, must not be, between us. I must speak plainly; it is better for both. Do you think your very silence about her has not told me the truth? You could not conquer. I say again I do not blame you now. We will part."

"No—no—oh! Heaven, no!"

With changing colour and dilated eyes, the girl stepped back hurriedly. Delmar, with an irresistible impulse, scarcely knowing what he did or said, turned suddenly and threw himself at her feet.

"Oh! Christine, I dare not ask you to trust me, my word of honour is worthless; but, before Heaven, I swear Maddie is not between us. I have been so near death—it has been so awful, I could not live now—never again to you. I have no right, no claim to stay you. I have not one plea you could listen to," he faltered, bending his head lower still, made an effort to speak again, and, failing, drew from his breast the flower he had laid there and put it in her hand.

Just a faded rose, with its glorious colour faded, and only the faintest fragrance left of all its rich perfume. That was what she held—that was what she gazed at till it changed and was radiant and eternal in beauty.

He, kneeling still, lifted his head—whether because she touched him or breathed his name, or put the flower to her lips, he never knew—he knew only that he started up with some half-articulate exclamation, and then that she was clinging to him. There was nothing wanting to the rapture deep and wild of that moment—even his dear right of man was restored to him—his right to protect, to uphold; for it was Christine, so long the sustainer of others as well as herself, whose brave spirit yielded to happiness as it never had to grief; who could only cling ever closer and closer, and struggle against the tears she could not quite conquer. It was Delmar who soothed, who whispered loving words, who stroked tenderly the head she could not lift, who looked at last into eyes that had only once before held for him half so divine a light.

"Oh," whispered the girl, "I was so wretched! why—why did you doubt me?"

And then the perfectness of joy was gone—it had been just one moment between the years

that were past and the years that were to come, and never again would its radiance return.

Involuntarily he drew her head down again, while he asked the question, with a sorrowful bitterness,—

"Why do you not doubt me?"

He felt her pause. His heart stood still, his very breath was suspended. "I have lied to you," that question said—"won you by a lie, repeated that lie before Heaven, acted it here on this very spot where I make a fresh vow. You have no ground of trust—no guarantee." But the glorious grey eyes looked up at him, into his very soul, and a smile rippled over the tender lips.

"I am not afraid," she said.

"Oh, Christine, how you shame me!"

Only that cry forced from him, and then silence. When he spoke again it was in low, broken accents.

"Can you wonder now that I dared not speak! Day by day and night by night I lay and thought of that wretched past, till even the death I dreaded would have been welcomed. I dishonoured, only fit for scorn—I forgiven, and watched and tended—I who in heart had wilfully committed against you the deepest sin I could—I to offer you love by even a look! What could it be worth—what could it, what can it now bring you but pain! And yet I could not help it."

"Ah, I like to hear you say that! But why pain! I thought once that all my love for you was dead, but when you were ill—dying—and they sent for me, I did not seem to live till I had got back to you again. I have been trying to face another parting—I thought it must come—and oh! I wanted only to ask you to try and love me. That past was all wiped out and I tried to make you understand that."

"Wiped out!" repeated Delmar—"no, that can never be. Hush—don't look so eager and open such pleading lips"—he put his hand over them—"answer me truly—I am heart-sick of deceptions; the love that came back to you—"

"It never left me."

"Well, if you will it so, I will change the form of words. The love you give me now—is it quite the same you gave me when I asked you for this flower?" taking it from her as he spoke.

His strength left him, he bent his head down on hers, waiting for the answer. He had asked for truth—he wanted truth—and yet when it came the bitterness of death seemed in it; for the girl lifted her face to him silently, a face all quivering and with trembling lips. That mute effort to soften the harshness of her silence—it almost took from him the little power over himself he yet retained.

"For ever—oh! Christine, for ever! The truth still, for Heaven's sake!"

"For Heaven's sake then—no!"

Then they kissed each other.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was growing dusk—and the ruddy flames illumined the deerhound, as he lay stretched in luxurious ease on the tawny-bued rug in the scene of dog-like happiness, and then they danced off to deepen into burnished gold the glittering hair of the man who sat by the hearth, with dreamy eyes, watching the fire. So deep was his reverie that he scarcely heard the steps coming up the room—nay, he almost started at the hand on his shoulder—but the sombre thoughtfulness of his face gave way at once less to a smile than to a light that came suddenly and lingered, passing away slowly.

"I left you to rest," said the newcomer; "have you obeyed me?"

"I tried to—I should have succeeded better if you had stayed, but I am not tired now."

His action pointed the word, for as she drew up a footstool and sat down at his feet, he laid his hand on the chestnut locks. It was a deep pleasure to him to lavish on a loved object all his pent-up tenderness, to again give caresses; and Christine's nature opened out to love and its signs, feeling itself in its true home.

There was no triumph in her heart over the rival who had lived in that home—a pang, perhaps, that here had not been the first footstep over its threshold—no shadow of fear that the door would ever again be closed to her. She knew through what fires the man had passed—cleansing fires, leaving their trace in lifelong scars.

And love is so true a discernor—at least, in the souls that are made for each other. She might have reasoned that this vehement nature could take no medium course—true or false, saint or sinner, each must be the very utmost of its kind—its repentance an agony, and the sin flung away for ever; but she had no need of such pleas—she had accepted his faith when reasoning was an impossibility—it was as little possible to her now.

Delmar was the first to rouse himself.

"There is so much I wanted to say to you that you would not let me say before," he said; "mine was only half a confession."

"It was all I wanted."

"Does that mean only that you are satisfied, or that you cannot bear to hear anything further?"

"It means only that I am satisfied. I can bear anything, if it does not hurt you."

"It does hurt me—it will hurt me to the end of my life. But I would rather tell you—you will know then what you are trusting to. You know the beginning of all this—I fancy you do, though you never told me."

"Pelham told me everything."

"Everything—but what does that cover?"

"You told me the truth about him!" said Christine, looking steadily into the fire, "he said so himself." She would not give way—she would not add by one pang to the torturing self-reproach her words must give him. She knew they did by his silence.

It was minutes before he spoke again, then it was only to say—"You owe that, too, to me—my poor child!" She was forced then to yield up her stoicism, laying her face against his knee. She could just manage a broken whisper—"I could not believe he would ever fail—and he did!"

The words held the whole anguish of wounded love and shame which had stricken her, and to Delmar it seemed as if that crowning sin of his was like the rings that eddy in disturbed water—circling wider and wider till they stretch over its whole surface.

He dared not comfort this grief his own hand had helped to lay on her—he dared not even touch her. It was part of her sorrow that she understood this, and with an effort she overcame her weakness.

"But you reconciled us," she said, with such a radiant look. No one would have thought she had suffered so sharply a minute ago.

"A poor reparation—reconciliation must follow a severance. I know how it was—I should say I felt it—though I could not speak; and perhaps should never have asked you if I could. I never felt it more than that night he came up, and you never said a word to him. I understood you—it was partly that made me know all I had done had not taken you from me; but I knew also that, of the two of us, Pelham had done the least wrong. I don't know what makes me say all this to you, Christine," he broke off abruptly—"I never could talk of myself to anyone before—not even"—again he stopped, biting his lip.

"To Maddy," Christine said, very quietly. "Albert, if there is to be so much reticence between us, it will inevitably make a barrier, do what we will—a something in each mind the other cannot get at. You hold back for my sake—I do not need it. I know you loved her deeply. I would rather it were so than a light affection that could be easily uprooted."

"I sometimes think it was—only a year ago—little more; and yet no; I idealised her, and when I saw the reality, the love for the ideal faded. But I never could trace it all clearly, try as I would. And as for you, Christine, did you read those letters Pelham had?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry; the first ought never to have

been written. When I wrote the second my mood had changed; it was not merely a wish to arrange things which made me want to see you, and if I had seen you that day when I sent for Maddy, I believe—no, I ought not to say that."

"Why not? Because you think it will trouble me that Pelham and Maddy would not tell you where I was?"

"I meant that; but you should not find it a trouble, darling. Years ago mother used to tell me I should need something of this sort to tame me. I am tamed enough now. I never would listen to her, except by fits and starts—not even the last time she came to me."

Struck by a change in his tone, the girl twisted herself round to look into his face.

"Why do you say 'I came to you'?" she asked, wonderingly.

"It is true. Do you remember the night when you gave me this rose?"

She said "Yes" under her breath, keeping her gaze fixed on him. He looked into the fire, speaking in a dreamy, hushed way.

"When you were standing by me on the terrace I know she was near me. I cannot tell you the strange sense I had of her presence, something of the way I used to feel with her when I was a child, and yet not the same. You asked me afterwards what made me start."

"I remember."

"Well, even that supreme love that had brought her back to me when I seemed going from her to all eternity—even that could not hold me. If it were not because you love me, I should not believe there was in me one grain of good. And yet once I thought I might be different—when I first knew Maddy. I was so happy then."

He paused. Christine did not speak, waiting, only slipping her hand into his, feeling in the depths of her being the clinging way his closed round it. Then he began talking of his earlier manhood—a word here and there, no connected history—frequent pauses; abrupt moving on to some other period.

When he came to speak of Maddy, of his utter trust in her, of the sparkle and warm-heartedness that had been like balm to his restless, wayward spirit; of that day on the river so cloudlessly happy that he could not speak of it even now without breaking voice; of his impatient waiting for her letter, of the time when it came, Christine, going with him step by step, saw how almost irremediable had been the injury wrought in him by Maddy's ignorant hand.

Almost—not quite; there had been somewhere in him the power, however feeble at first, to recover his footing; the strength to take up his life again, seared as it was, to face the struggle and sorrow that lay before him, rather than sink back again—better than all, the humility to acknowledge he received no punishment he did not deserve.

What might not Maddy have done with him if she had had for him one tithe of the love she professed? Lightly as he touched on all these passages, it was enough for his listener. He did not seem able to dwell much on that part of his life, passing on to the time they had spent together in Kate Lonsdale's house; then to the life in his own old home.

"That night you came down to me again," he said, "I knew you half understood me, and if I had been less demon than I was I should have yielded to you. It was the hardest thing I ever did to resist the longing. I did not love you—nay, I had persuaded myself that a Clifford should only be hated; but I would have given the world to have let you nestle to me a little longer as you did then. When you left me—not then—I mean after I told you—"

"Albert!" the girl said, earnestly, seeing how he faltered, "why tell me this?"

"I don't know—except that I cannot rest until you know. Did you ever think what sort of life I led then?"

"Yes, a thousand times! Did you?—very wisely—'ever miles me! But you could not—you did not love me."

"I can't tell!" said Delmar, a little hurriedly.

"When I came back that night and found your letter, I was half wild, and yet I had so keen a

sympathy with you. I have burnt the letter, Christine—I have enough witnesses against me. I did not miss you quite at first, afterwards it grew on me. The house seemed empty—deserted—I could not bear it. And Colin—the dog hearing his name lifted his great head, leally, and Christine stooped to pat him—"I think I loved him better," Delmar went on, smiling at her, "for your sake—but whether there was some softness towards you, or whether I had a keener sense of my own wrong doing, I cannot tell. I don't think I want to analyse it. All I do know is that I never could put into words the milllonth part of what you were to me in all that long terrible illness. I may be able to speak of it one day—I cannot now. You never will know—such souls as yours cannot—what it is to count the minutes to death, and see God only as the judge."

He shuddered all over, and the girl, leaving her seat, knelt beside him.

"That is over, darling," she said, nestling close to him.

"Yes, thank Heaven!" said Delmar, drawing a long breath. "When you forgave I thought Heaven might forgive; before it seemed impossible. Those prayers—I could scarcely bear them—afterwards I looked for them."

A long time neither stirred; the flames no longer leapt merrily up; they sank, and a red glow threw deep shadows over the room; the dog yawned, and stretched himself in the grateful heat. He satisfied himself that the two he loved were near him, and went to sleep again. And those two never moved till Christine lifted herself to whisper she must not forget she was still nurse, and Delmar rose without a word, held her in a long strained clasp, and went out. And when later she stole up to give him a last look, he was sleeping quietly, and as her lips touched his, only smiled, as if he felt she had kissed him.

(To be continued.)

HOW IT ALL CAME RIGHT.

—15—

"The great question," said Mildred, anxiously, "is, Will they forgive us?"

"And I'll answer it," said her young husband, confidently. "Yes, of course they will. Do you really suppose, Mrs. Westbrook, that the most stony-hearted parents that ever existed could possibly manage to keep up an unforgiving spirit against such an adorable little darling as you are? or against me for having had the good taste to fall in love with you?"

Thus was the conversation changed from the decidedly sensible fears for the future with which Mrs. Westbrook had begun it, to the exceedingly sentimental remarks which very young couples are apt to find much more interesting.

They were a very young couple in two ways. Young in years—seventeen and twenty-two—and young in wedded experience, for it was less than a week since the night on which Mildred March had left on the pincushion the farewell note for her grandmother and had eloped to London with Ned Westbrook.

Of the few young men in the little Sussex village where they had met, Ned was precisely the one of whom Mrs. March—an aristocrat to her finger-tips—most disapproved; while pretty, penniless Mildred, by way of set-off, was about the last person in the world whom John Westbrook—rich and proud in his own way as all the Marshes were from the days of the Conquest down—would have wished his only son to marry.

For a lively feud existed between the two families—a feud which had been born of trifles, and had grown through all the years since the elder Westbrook came to Deepden, to rise from poverty to affluence by the might of his own skilful hands and inventive brain, while the fortunes of the Marshes—who had owned half the county in bygone times—were going down as rapidly as his rose; a feud which had been embittered by a hundred polite insolences, when the exclusive village society—of which Mrs. March

was the recognised autocrat—began to welcome the successful man into its ranks; a feud which was only strengthened by proximity.

The terrace gardens of the great Westbrook house—a superb pile like a Renaissance chateau, in brand new stone and brick—swept down to the edge of the grassy lawn where the old home of the Marches stood embowered among ancient elms, whose masses of feathery foliage only revealed glimpses of the gambrel roof that had sheltered both Royalists and Roundheads in its day; and the inmates of the two could not help but meet at church and in the village, and see each other at all times and seasons.

"What is the world coming to!" sighed Mrs. March, with mild despair of the tendency of the times written in every line of her delicately refined face, as she saw Ned just from Oxford riding past on his handsome black thoroughbred, with the sunshine dazzling on his close-cut golden hair—a gallant, graceful sight to see, indeed—and attired in the very latest and most correct fashion, from the toe of his spurred boot to the top of his high silk hat. "I well remember the time, Mildred, when that young man's father was glad to earn a shilling by holding your grandfather's horse, and only look at him now!"

As her grand-daughter was still quite a stranger in the village—having only recently left the stylish boarding-school where her father had placed her shortly before his death, two years previously—Mrs. March further relieved her mind by launching out from this beginning into a history of all the various offenses of the Westbrook family for the last quarter of a century.

"A pretty little thing enough," remarked John Westbrook, patronisingly, as he observed his son's blue eyes—which never hid many of their owner's thoughts—admiringly following Miss March's slim, white figure as she flitted about among her favourite flowers, watering-pot in hand, in a part of the lawn overlooked by the balcony where the two men were enjoying their after-dinner cigars in the tranquil summer gloaming—"A pretty little thing enough, but with more blue blood than money and with more pride than common sense. No, I don't know her personally, but I do know the folks she comes of, and that's more than enough for me. People with such airs and ideas have no business to live. Why, Ned, I could tell you—"

And accordingly he proceeded to inflict on his inwardly-bored but outwardly-respectful son the oft-told tale of his many disagreements with the Marches, movingly set forth from his own point of view.

After this, the inherent perversity of youthful human nature is quite sufficient to account for the fact that Ned and Mildred began to regard each other with greater interest than before, and a little later, when their unsuspecting hostess introduced them to each other at one of the mild festivities which diversified the dulness of the village summer, he decided that she was not at all haughty and disdainful; and she, that he was not in the least vulgar. And once formally begun, their acquaintances advanced with rapid strides.

It would be hard to tell which, Mr. Westbrook or Mrs. March, was the most surprised and indignant when Master Ned sought their consent to his marriage with Millie.

For once in their lives they were of the same opinion, and that opinion was expressed in two of the most emphatic refusals that a light-hearted young lover ever received.

Thereupon followed in due course pleading, argument, defiance, elopement.

Ned had a most comfortable conviction that this last would be at once forgiven; for his father had never before refused him anything, and he was altogether too much in love to imagine it possible for any man or woman to long resist his bonnie bride.

Yet it certainly did seem to him that the "stony-hearted parents" were holding out uncommonly well.

Even on the very morning when he so airily assured his wife that they were sure of forgiveness, he had begun to grow rather anxious himself; for he had taken care to give their London address in the notes they had written jointly to Mrs.

March and Mr. Westbrook just after their marriage, and ample time to receive answers had passed.

Still, he had plenty of money as yet, London had many attractions, and their rooms at a fashionable boarding-house were pleasant and luxurious, while life just then would have had charms to him on a desert island if shared with Mildred, and he had buoyancy enough to keep up the spirits of both.

That evening, however, as they were lingering leisurely over dessert in their private parlour, two letters arrived, one for each. Bride and bridegroom fairly pounced upon them in their eagerness.

"I'll give you mine in a minute, but I suppose I ought to read it first myself," observed Ned, with a fine sense of loyalty to his divided duty, as he opened his father's letter.

The rest of Mr. Westbrook's correspondents, who invariably found him brief, bent on business, and "hard as nails," would have been very much astonished could they have seen any of the letters he had written his boy—whenever they had been parted before—long, pleasant, entertaining letters full of that spirit of perfect confidence and friendship which, rare and delightful as it is between men of equal age, is still rarer and more delightful between father and son.

But this letter was in a vein altogether new to Ned.

Short and stern, it coldly disowned him for his marriage, and only grew warm when it referred to Mildred and her grandmother. There, indeed, it had been written with a fluent pen, and waxed positively eloquent in its vituperation.

Ned looked up from it with a face of gloom and indignation to encounter his wife's eyes swimming with tears, fixed upon him with a gleam of loving hope in the midst of despair. She tossed Mrs. March's letter to him across the table with a gesture at once tragic and appealing.

"Read that," she said, her voice broken with sobs in spite of all her efforts to steady it. "Grandma won't forgive us, and she casts me off forever—and she says the most cruel things about you—and your father! And I know she did love me dearly, and that I've made her feel dreadfully herself; and—what—shall—I do?"

What she did was to sink helplessly into the nearest chair, and hide her face in both hands and cry.

Ned strode hastily round to her, dropped on one knee by her side, gathered her forlorn little figure in his strong arm, and, holding her close to his heart, did a devoted bridegroom's best to console her.

He was soon so successful that she raised her head from its resting-place on his broad shoulder, and nestled her cheek close to his caressingly.

"How good you are to me!" she murmured, regarding him with a tender admiration. "I won't cry—I won't care for anything else in the world while I have you; and your father shall be mine, too!"

"That's just what he positively declines to be!" groaned poor Ned. "My dear, my dear, he's cast me off quite as completely as your grandmother has you! He's a man of his word, is the governor, and he'll not change. We have nobody but each other now, little wife; but I feel rich so."

He had expected that Mildred would be reduced to despair by this disclosure; but, womanlike, knowing the worst and finding that her husband was as unfortunate as herself, she at once crushed her own grief out of sight and became the sweetest of comforters to him—a proceeding which added fuel to the fire of what he thought his just indignation.

"The idea," he growled to himself (he could not relieve his mind to her, for he would not hurt her feelings by letting her know all his father had written)—"the idea of the governor's calling her a mercenary little fortune-hunter, when she never even thinks of his money—only for the difference its loss makes to me! It will be strange if I don't take care of myself and her, too, I think. And he's sure Mrs. March plotted

and planned to bring about the match, is he! I wonder what she has to say on that subject! I may as well read her letter, I suppose, since Millie gave it to me."

He did read it, and it by no means tended to soothe his temper.

Its tone was very calm, very proud, very polite. It was "written in cream—of tartar and oil—of vitriol."

It was such an epistle as only a deeply-offended lady can produce, and was even more irritating than Mr. Westbrook's, as the light, stinging flick of a silken-lashed whip across the face is yet more insulting than a sledge-hammer blow.

Ned laid the two letters side by side on the writing-table, and stood looking thoughtfully down upon them.

He was boiling with rage against the man who had insulted his wife, and the woman who scorned his father and himself; but he was outwardly very quiet.

"If the one were any man but my father, I could at least have the gratification of giving him a sound thrashing; and the other is an old woman, and my wife's grandmother, which is worse," he told himself, helplessly. "I can't do anything—can't even answer them as they deserve! I wish they would just say all those things to each other, though. But they never will; for the governor is too much of a gentleman to quarrel with a woman face to face, and Mrs. March wouldn't speak to him even for the pleasure of giving him a piece of her mind. It's a pity they can't know the good opinion each has of the other; and, especially, that she can't know how utterly he thinks I throw myself away by marrying Millie, and he what a méalliance Millie made according to her grandmother's ideas. It would be some comfort if they could only see each other's precious letters. And they shall!"

He smiled vindictively at the thought which struck him.

A little later, having easily obtained his wife's permission to dispose of her letter without explaining what he meant to do with it, he had enclosed his father's missive to Mrs. March, and vice versa, sending with each a most respectfully-worded note, to the effect that he trusted they might find it a satisfaction to see that his marriage was equally condemned by both, and that, though it was a grief to his wife and himself that neither of their relatives would forgive them, yet they were happy with each other, and felt no fear in depending on themselves for the future.

He was still enough of a boy to keenly enjoy his own mischief, and he whistled gaily as he went back to his rooms after dropping the two letters into the pillar-box.

"But with the morning cool reflection came," and in the course of the next three days Ned gained a realising sense of a slide of life he had never before dreamed to consider.

The prosaic, world-old questions, "What will ye eat! and wherewith shall ye be clothed!" forced themselves rudely upon his attention.

Not that his money was exhausted yet, or the pinch of poverty felt; but the prudent instincts of his father woke within him, and urgently demanded to know how he proposed to support the girl he had persuaded to leave her home and cast her lot with his.

Had it not been for her, he might have gone on in happy carelessness till his funds ran low; but the thought that she was dependent upon him roused him to a sudden knowledge of a man's duty, and the dignity of a man's true place in this work-a-day world.

Hitherto he had known no more of such stern realities of life than Mildred herself. Now, confronted with the necessity of making his own way without the fortune or the powerful friend he had cast aside, he learned, as one does learn things when too late, the value of the pleasant years he had trifled away.

Money had been freely lavished on his education, and he was neither idle nor ignorant, but, like many others, he had never learned any one thing that men need to have done or taught so thoroughly that he could live by it.

Training, special skill, technical knowledge

were demanded everywhere, and he had none of these.

He could get no situation of any sort. Full of life, strength, energy, he seemed to himself to stand a helpless good-for-nothing in a world of strangers, among whom he could make himself no place.

It is the oldest of stories, the commonest of experiences, but it comes upon every one who lives it with the shock of a special revelation.

Why had he not fitted himself for something? Ned inwardly inquired, with bitterness of spirit. Every avenue of success had been open to him, but he had not cared to enter any. He had never even thought of choosing a profession; he had altogether disdained to take a place in his father's business, as the latter had wished him to do when he left college.

And with the memory of his father's wishes and plans for him came a remorseful realization of the love which had made the world so smooth to him, and which, as so many others have done, he had often carelessly disappointed, and had never valued at its worth till now that he had lost it.

But for the fear of being thought moved by mercenary reasons, he would have written his father such a letter as would have rejoiced the stern, lonely man's heart; but that fear kept him from doing anything which might seem like a plea for reinstatement.

Those three days changed him more than as many years might have done, yet there was little change to be seen.

He kept his new thoughts to himself, for he would not say anything to Mildred which might make her fear he regretted their marriage, and he was resolved not to trouble her with his anxieties about money till he must, as he thought she already had troubles enough of her own.

With the deepening and strengthening of his character by pain, a still greater tenderness had been blended with his love for her.

And, indeed, Millie, in her different way, was almost as sad and remorseful as Ned.

Love has its own rights and laws, as lovers reason, but there are so many sorts of love, and it is not well if the new, imperious passion of youth is to make one impatient and hard and disloyal to the poor, neglected, well-meaning kindred love which has wrapped one round with an atmosphere of care and kindness since life began; and, in spite of all Ned's efforts of consolation, his runaway bride could not help feeling this.

Meantime, outwardly, their life flowed on much as before. They had not even left the hotel—Ned having at first paid for some time in advance—when, on the afternoon of the third day, a visitor arrived.

Mildred was alone in the parlour when she heard a knock at the door, and in answer to her invitation to enter there appeared, not the servant she had supposed was outside, but, without card or announcement, her father-in-law himself!

She sprang to her feet in surprise, mingled with absolute fear, and stood silent, a small, shrinking figure, in her pale, rose-coloured tennish gown, looking at him with wide, wondering dark eyes.

"Where's my son?" brusquely inquired Mr. Westbrook, himself rather at a loss alone with this dainty little lady.

At the question the young wife recovered herself.

What did this dreaded personage intend to do to Ned?

She drew herself up with much dignity, though her lips were quivering like the leaves of a wind-stirred rose.

"My husband has gone to the city," she said, with a sly pique; and then suddenly her voice broke into an eager little cry, "Say anything you like to me, Mr. Westbrook, but please don't scold him. He is so good and kind, and so unhappy now because you won't forgive him."

"I don't come to scold either of you," answered Ned's father, and made an awkward pause.

It was not as easy as he had thought to tell

this flower-faced, clear-eyed girl the reason of his coming.

Her grandmother's letter had roused him to such a pitch of wrathful generosity, that he resolved to at once forgive the young couple for the express purpose of showing Mrs. March whether or no Mildred had made a *mésalliance* in marrying his son.

He would push Ned forward in public life and in society; he would buy Millie the costliest trousseau and the most magnificent diamonds to be had; and he would bring them both home in triumph to display before the eyes of Mrs. March, and crush her disdainful pride by the sight of the power and the splendour of his wealth.

But now the sarcastic speech he had carefully prepared wherewith to explain all this to the action of the Marches slunk out of his mind; and there came instead a swift memory of the pretty golden-haired girl who had loved him in his youth and poverty, had kept his courage up by her own firm faith in him through all the weary years of his fight with fortune, and had died just when the tide of success at last set toward him, leaving him the little child for whom she had given her life, and who had grown into the man that this other girl-wife was defending with such proud and loving eyes.

He took a step towards her, his own shrewd, hard grey eyes softening.

"I came to forgive you both," he said, the roughness of his face and ways tempered by just the same natural, deferential gentleness towards womanhood that was the underlying charm of his handsome son's perfect manner. "Will you forgive me, my dear, for not realising before what a sweet daughter Ned has given me, and how much need I have of you at home?"

That she forgave him immediately, that she sang the praises of his son to him and he to her, that they were upon the most friendly and confidential terms in five minutes, was all what any one might have expected.

But what certainly neither of them expected was that when Ned returned, and, eagerly throwing open the door, paused in mute amazement on the threshold, he was accompanied by an old lady, small, slender and erect, with bright, dark eyes and snowy hair.

"Mr. Westbrook!" she exclaimed.

"Mrs. March!" literally gasped that gentleman, in the same second.

A little while before, Ned, whom business had taken to Victoria Station, had encountered Mrs. March in the crowd pouring out of the carriages.

She was tired, and felt strange and lonely and at a loss in the great, bustling city, after her years as the autocrat of the quiet little Deepden.

Even if she had not come on purpose for a reconciliation, she would have been heartily glad to see any human creature she knew; and while he hesitated whether or not to venture on speaking to her she greeted him most cordially.

She glossed over their quarrel with fine tact and discretion. She was kind, friendly even maternal, and she was altogether too wise to inform the mystified young man of her reason for thus suddenly "going to see her grandchildren," as she prettily expressed it.

Great was his secret remorse as he thought of the insulting letter his father had written him and he himself had sent to this gracious lady, for little did he dream that that same letter had been the motive power which impelled her forgiveness.

As one nail drives out another, so did her indignation at the elder Westbrook drive out her anger with Ned.

She mercenary! she angling for that ex-mill-hand's money—she a Pensonby by birth and a March by marriage!

She fumed and raged in solitude, withheld by the restraints of sex and good breeding from the fiery retort she would have liked to send her neighbour. And at length there dawned upon her the idea of a practical retort, giving the lie without words to all Westbrook's imputations.

On these thoughts intent, she had come to London; but somehow, under the spell of Ned's

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frank face, and the tender, practical way in which he took possession of her, and relieved her of the small burden of her shawl and satchel, and gave her his arm, and escorted her through the crowd she had rather dreaded, and helped her into a hack, a change came over the spirit of her dream.

It was pleasant, after all the years she had depended on her herself, to have this feeling of being taken care of again. It seemed almost like the old times, when her own son was alive and with her.

And, then, the young fellow was so handsome and manly and well-bred, so attentive to herself and so evidently devoted to her Millie, that, as their conversation grew confidential during the drive to the boarding-house, she felt that she could be very honestly fond of him, and her small revenge upon Mr. Westbrook gained a sweetness not meant by the old saying.

But to meet the man himself *tête à tête* with her own darling!

Amusement is altogether too weak a word to describe her feelings and his, as they silently confronted one another after those first irrepressible exclamations.

For a long moment each regarded the other very much after the fashion of a strange cat and dog, who suddenly meet and are uncertain if it is best to fight, fly, or make friends. Then—they made friends.

How they did it none of the four could have told except Mrs. March, who had realized and gracefully accepted the situation, while the others still stood tongue-tied and helpless.

No one could have less understood how the event came about than did Mr. Westbrook himself; but before many minutes had passed he was set quite at his ease and was chatting pleasantly with his ancient enemy, who made no allusion, then or later, to either of the two letters which had worked this wondrous change.

Nor did this change continue to be merely on the surface; for, much to the delight of Ned and Millie, with the growth of their acquaintance, mutual respect and regard grew between the two proud, strong-willed people, whose natures had a certain likeness in spite of all the differences which they learned to tolerate in each other.

If anything had been needed to complete Mr. Westbrook's happiness in regaining his son, with the addition of a dearly-loved daughter-in-law, it would have been the interest in business affairs which marriage developed in Ned; while Mrs. March consoles herself for this low taste in that otherwise admirable young man by reflecting that in these degenerate days even the English aristocracy themselves have taken to trade.

FACETIE.

"You say they are twins, and yet one is five years older than her sister?" "Yes. You see, one of them is married and one is not."

THE JUDGE: "So you were getting money by calling yourself a survivor of H.M.S. *Victoria*, eh?" The Onlooker: "Well, ain't I? I've been livin' ever since it sank."

"GOODNESS, Tom! did you notice what a freezing look that girl gave you when she tumbled into your lap?" "Freezing? I should say so. She was a Laplander in more ways than one."

ELLEN: "I'm sure he dances divinely; his feet hardly seem to touch the ground." Algy (a bit jealous): "Exactly so; they are mostly on his partner's toes."

YOUNG DAD (enthusiastically): "I say, old man, have I told you the last bright saying of my youngster?" Friend (wearily): "I hope so."

MOTHER (reading): "A Manchester inventor has just patented a machine that will tow a man 500 feet into the air by simply touching a spring." Pretty Daughter: "Goodness gracious! Let me destroy that paper before papa gets hold of it!"

DOCTOR: "I believe you have some sort of poison in your system." Patient: "Shouldn't wonder. What was that last stuff you gave me?"

HENRY, who was heard talking to himself one day, said: "It seems funny to me, when I am cross I am naughty, but when papa and mamma are cross they are only nervous."

A GENTLEMAN, stopping to admire two little girls—twins, was somewhat astonished when one of them looked up and remarked: "We look pretty, but we fight."

"NOTHING like plenty of sleep to make a boy happy and healthy," said the visitor. "I get too much at night," said the little boy, "but not enough in the morning."

HUNGERFORD: "Do you believe, doctor, that the use of tobacco tends to shorten a man's days?" Dr. Powell: "I know that it does. I tried to stop once, and the days were about ninety hours long."

"THERE is nothing more uncertain than a horse race!" exclaimed the man with a tendency to assert his opinion. And the melancholy friend responded: "Ah, you never worked in a meteorological office!"

"WOMAN'S work is never done," complained Mrs. Wrinkle, as she passed the bread to her husband. "No!" assented Wrinkle, as he broke it open; "I wonder why it is they never get done in the centre!"

"Isn't that young man fond of music?" exclaimed the young woman. "I don't know," answered Miss Cayenne. "Judging by the way he will stand up and listen to himself singing by the hour, I should say he isn't."

MRS FOWLER: "So you have been to sit up with a sick man, eh? John Fowler, can you look me in the face and say that?" Mr. Fowler: "Why, of course, I can. Nettie, what do you take me for—just an ordinary amateur liar?"

"WHAT would our wives say if they only knew where we are to-night?" remarked the captain of a vessel beating about in a thick fog. "I wouldn't care what they said," replied the mate, "if we only knew where we were ourselves."

O'HOGGERTY: "Did yez hav a good time at the wake?" M'Labberty: "A good time is it! Begorra, Oi had to hold on to the collar av me coat wid both hands ahl the way home to kape from fallin' down."

BLIMBUS: "Well, here's another spring-cleaning joke. This is the sixteenth spring-cleaning joke that I've seen in this paper within a week." Hamby: "Impossible, my boy, impossible! There is no such thing as a spring-cleaning joke. It's a tragedy."

SUB-EDITOR: "The street is all excitement. An electric light wire has blocked traffic, and no one knows whether it is a live wire or not." Editor: "Detail two reporters to go to the wire immediately—one to feel it the other to write the result."

MAGISTRATE: "Why didn't you answer to your name?" Vagrant: "Beg pardon, yer washup, but I forgot what name I guv last night." Magistrate: "Didn't you give your own name?" Vagrant: "No, yer washup, I'm travelling inoog."

He had come upon her doing in her hammock, and when she woke up she accused him of stealing a kiss. "Well," he said, "I will admit that the temptation was too strong to be resisted. I did steal one little kiss." "One," she exclaimed, indignantly; "I counted eight before I woke up."

Two commercial travellers were comparing notes. "I have been out three weeks," said the first, "and I have only got four orders." "That beats me," said the other. "I have been out four weeks and have only got one order, and that's from the firm to come home."

"DOCTOR," said he, "I'm a victim of insomnia. I can't sleep if there's the least noise—such as a cat on the back fence, for instance." "This powder will be effective," replied the physician, after compounding a prescription. "When do I take it, doctor?" "You don't take it. Give it to the cat in a little milk."

A SON of Ireland was painting a fencer. His face wore a troubled look. Suddenly a smile shot across it, and, dipping the brush in the paint-pot, he began to paint faster and faster. "Why are you painting so fast?" asked a bystander. "You're in a rush all of a sudden to finish the job." "Shure, an' that's all right," was his reply. "I haven't much paint left, an' it's finishing the job Oi'm ather, before it's all gone."

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SOCIETY.

THE Emperor William, despite the fact that he has only one arm with which he can shoot, is nevertheless quite one of the finest shots in Europe. Last year he brought down 897 head of game while attending the Court different shooting-parties.

"QUEEN'S BOUNTY" costs her Majesty on an average £375 a year. The Queen, when she sent three sovereigns to a mother who had given birth to three children forty years ago, probably did not foresee to what vital dimensions the "bounty" would grow.

THE Duchess of Coburg is going to spend a long time in Russia this year and in Roumania. She is devoted to her grandson, Prince Carol, and to his little sister, who are now her Royal Highness's best consolers.

THE Duchess of York is a most enthusiastic collector of parasols. She has no fewer than one hundred, and all are made from special designs in order that the combination of colour with her costume and hat may be perfectly realised.

THE children of the Duke and Duchess of York and the Duke and Duchess of Fife regard "Auntie Maud" as the most wonderful person they know, for she is an indefatigable "romp," and her resources in thinking out new games is illimitable.

EXPERT for a three days' visit to Buckingham Palace from the 15th to the 18th inst., Her Majesty will stay at Windsor until the evening of Thursday, May 25th, when she goes to Balmoral, accompanied by Princess Louise and the Princess of Leiningen. The Queen will return to Windsor from Balmoral on Saturday, June 24th.

THE German Emperor proposes to visit Rome again this spring—his third visit since his accession. He will be there in time for the inauguration of the beautiful new decorations at the German Embassy, where the rooms have been embellished by frescoes. Possibly a fancy ball may be given at the Embassy in honour of the event, and there is some idea of asking the guests to come in old Roman costume.

THE Tsaritzin has a shawl which she values very highly. It was sent her by the ladies of Oranburg, a town of South-Eastern Russia. It reached her in a wooden box with silver hooks and hinges, the outside being embellished with designs of spears, turbans, whips, &c., on a ground of blue enamel, that being the colour of the Cossack uniform. The shawl is about ten yards square, but it is so exquisitely fine, that it can be passed through a ring, and when folded makes a small parcel of a few inches only.

THE Duke of Cambridge, who recently attained the age of eighty, was born in Hanover on March 26th, 1819. He is the oldest of the members of the English Royal Family, being two months older than the Queen. There has not been an octogenarian in the English Royal Family since the death of Mary Duchess of Gloucester, the fourth daughter of George III. Another octogenarian child of George III. was the late King of Hanover and Duke of Cumberland, who died in 1851. George III. who died at the age of eighty-two, was the only other member of the Hanoverian family who attained the age of eighty since the succession of that dynasty to the throne. But the family has been on the whole long-lived, a large proportion of its members reaching the age of seventy and upwards.

THE Queen is to lay the foundation-stone of the new front of the South Kensington Museum on Wednesday, the 17th inst., and the function will be a semi-State one. The Queen is to drive with a military escort from Buckingham Palace to the Museum and back, and her Majesty will give a large dinner-party in the evening. The ceremonial to be observed will not be definitely settled until after the Queen has returned to Windsor; but there is to be all the elaborate paraphernalia which has been customary on such occasions. The Corps Diplomatique and Ministers will attend the function officially, and the Great Officers of the Household are to be in waiting on the Queen. It is probable that Levee dress will be worn.

STATISTICS.

GREAT BRITAIN exports 16,000,000 tons of coal annually.

KRUPP, the great German gun manufacturer, has made 20,000 cannons.

It has been estimated that steamers are 20 per cent. safer than sailing vessels.

THE difference of a farthing a pound in the total trade turnover of sugar in the United Kingdom for a year means no less than £3,000,000.

THERE are 256 railway stations within a six-mile radius of St. Paul's Cathedral, while within a twelve-mile radius there are nearly 400.

GEMS.

To suffer is the lot of all those who press forward, ahead of the world.

LIFE is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindness and small obligations given habitually are what preserves the heart and secures comfort.

FRIENDSHIP is a vase which, when it is flawed by heat, or violence or accident, may as well be broken at once. It never can be trusted after. The more graceful and ornamental it was the more clearly do we discern the hopelessness of restoring it to its former state. Coarse stones, if they are fractured, may be cemented again; precious ones, never.

WE must not be discouraged if we fall sometimes to act up to our good resolutions. We cannot conquer the enemy in one battle, but we must keep up with the struggle until the victory is won. Supposing the general of an army gave up at his first defeat—turned his back on the enemy and fled! we should not think him very valiant, but we should be very likely to call him false-hearted and a coward. Every day we shall have some enemy to meet in one form or another—some temptation to conquer; and every victory we gain over ourselves will make us stronger to resist the next temptation.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BRUNSWICK STEW.—Take two chickens, or three or four squirrels, or 25 cent shank of beef. Let them boil in water. Cook one pint butter beans and one quart tomatoes, with half-pint potatoes cooked and mashed with the meat. When done, add one dozen ears corn, one dozen large tomatoes, and one pound butter. Take out chicken, squirrel or beef, cut in small pieces and put back; one loaf bread and two slices of middling are an improvement. Season with salt and pepper, and cook until it is well done and thick enough to be beaten with a fork.

TO BOIL HAM.—Let the ham remain in soak from eight to twelve hours for a York ham, longer for others, changing the water frequently. Wash, clean and trim away from underside all rusty and smoked parts. Put in a pot, with sufficient cold water to cover it; bring gradually to the boil, and as the scum rises carefully remove it. Keep simmering gently till tender, and be careful that it does not stop boiling, nor boil too quickly. When done, take out of the pot, strip off the skin, and sprinkle over it a few fine bread-crumbs; put a frill of paper round the knuckle, and serve. If to be eaten cold, let the ham remain in the water till nearly cold before stripping off the skin. In Belgium hams are sometimes cooked with bay leaves and parsley in the water, with which is afterwards made a very good soup. Time: Ham of 10 lbs. four hours, to simmer gently; 15 lbs. five hours; a very large one, six hours.

MISCELLANEOUS.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S annual trip to and from Scotland alone costs her close on £3,250 a year.

GREEK girls, as a rule, are very pretty; yet at an early age they attempt to improve their native charms with paint and powder. The result is that at forty their faces are sallow, livid and withered.

THERE are so many languages spoken in the provinces of Austria-Hungary that interpreters are employed in the various Parliaments to interpret the speeches of the delegates and make them intelligible to all the members.

SPIDERS are a serious plague in Japan. They spin their webs on the telegraph wires, and are so numerous as to cause a serious loss of insulation. Sweeping the wires does little good, as the spiders begin all over again.

PNEUMATIC thimbles for typewriters are the latest devices for nerve economy. The new thimbles are of rubber, coming in sets, according to the size of glove worn, and are said to not only save the nerve shock, but also to increase the speed and strength of the stroke.

ALL the flags for British ships of war, except the royal standards, are made in the government dockyards, and the enormous number required may be judged from the fact that in the colour loft at Chatham alone about 18,000 flags are made in a year.

BY means of a valuable toughening process recently discovered, glass may now be moulded into lengths, and used as railway sleepers. Glass rails are also produced by this same toughening process. It is therefore possible to have a complete glass railway.

SOAP has been in use for 8,000 years, and is twice mentioned in the Bible. A few years ago a soap-boller's shop was discovered in Pompeii. The soap found in the shop had not lost its efficacy, although it had been buried 1,800 years.

CHINA still has the old-fashioned system of private letter-carrying. Letter-shops are to be found in every town. If he has a letter to send, the Chinaman goes to a letter shop and bargains with the keeper thereof. He pays two-thirds of the cost, leaving the receiver to pay the rest on delivery.

THE Swedish mile is the longest mile in the world. A traveller in Sweden, when told that he is only about a mile from a desired point, had better hire a horse, for the distance he will have to walk, if he choose in his ignorance to adopt that mode of travel, is exactly 11,700 yards.

A SANATORIUM for consumptives has for years been in existence in Nordrach, in the Black Forest of North-western Germany. The windows of the houses are kept open night and day; from some of them, indeed, the ashes have been removed. Thus, sleeping or waking, the inmates are always breathing the finest outdoor air.

BATH robes made of paper are now manufactured. The kind of material used resembles blotting-paper. Whole suits are made of this paper stuff, including coverings for the head and feet. One advantage of the fad is the cheapness of such a garment, making it possible for the poorest person to own one.

THE largest room in the world, under one roof and unbroken by pillars, is at St. Petersburg. It is 620 ft. long by 150 ft. in breadth. By daylight it is used for military displays, and a whole battalion can completely manoeuvre in it. By night 20,000 wax tapers give it a beautiful appearance. The roof is a single arch of iron.

THE way languages are built up is very interesting, and the derivation of the word "salary" is curious as well. In ancient times Roman soldiers received a daily portion of salt as part of their pay. Sal is the Latin for salt, and when the salt was in course of time commuted for money, the amount was called *salarium*, or salt money. Hence our word "salary" and hence, doubtless, the expression "not worth his salt," that is, not worth his "salt-money" or salary.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

M. B.—Only a connection by marriage.
IN TROUBLE.—You had better consult a solicitor.
GAMER.—Hall Caine makes his home in the Isle of Man.
LAUNDRESS.—Stir your starch with a piece of wax candle.
GIRARD.—Persons of both sexes become of age at twenty-one.
HAIRY GAMP.—Ammonia and water cleans mud off an umbrella.
LOCHINA.—To reduce a double chin constantly tap it with the finger.
LAST.—You would do well to abandon the idea which you have formed.
FAÇON.—Paris's 1000 exhibition will be the sixteenth held in that city.
CAREFUL WIFE.—Whitening and lime-juice cleans ivory knife-handles.
FEATHERED READER.—Bruised gloves kept among furs frighten moths away.
DEBUT.—The creditor is not bound to accept payment by instalments.
PARISHWORKER.—That responsibility falls upon the people's churchwarden.
PAUL'S MOTHER.—Discharge from the militia can be obtained on payment of £1.
UNION FORGOTTEN.—Gift picture frames should be cleaned with half an onion.
MILKED.—Melt glue with acetic acid and you have a cement that will mend either glass or china.
POLYMER.—The one who is already at table should be first to speak a good morning to the other.
SCIENCE.—Zoologists say that all known species of wild animals are gradually diminishing in size.
F. R.—When the child is seven years old you can offer to take it, and if refused stop the ailment.
PAW.—The "Vox Humana" is a rood stop in the organ intended to imitate the sound of the human voice.
BRIDE ELITE.—A plain travelling dress of gray or some other quiet colour is the best garment for travelling.
LADY CLARE.—It is too delicate a subject for us to give you advice upon, but your mother will know just what to say.
VIOLETTA.—It has either been imperfectly cured, or exposed to a damp atmosphere, and either way is irreparably damaged.
MADAME.—The simplest method for you would be to consult a good lawyer. He could find means for prosecuting the inquiries.
MISBET.—The simplest polish for russet shoes is tallow. Apply a small quantity to the shoe and then polish with a woollen cloth.
UNION.—A marriage must be celebrated in presence of at least two competent witnesses. The officiating clergyman could not be a witness.
QUESTIONER.—What is legally the "City" of London is only a small part of London, but London as a whole is the "largest city (or town) in the world."
F. W.—To cleanse and whiten the teeth try powdered charcoal, using it once or twice a week at night in addition to the morning cleansing with powder.
DAWK AND FIVE.—Drums were first introduced into Europe by the Saracens. The fife was introduced into the English Army by the Duke of Cumberland in 1745.
FOOTLIGHTS.—There are no books that can teach you how to become an actress. Practical experience is the one thing necessary and the training is long and arduous.
DEBATER.—To argue well and profitably implies mature knowledge of the subject argued, and this knowledge can only be acquired by study or actual experience.
DISSENT.—Green snow is found in three places in the world:—Near Mount Hecla, Iceland; fourteen miles east of the mouth of the Obi, and near Quilo, South America.
ONE IN DUTCH.—All so-called "cures" for drunkenness are of very doubtful value unless they are reinforced by the persistent determination of the victim to stop drinking.
POLLER.—Remove the stalks of the watercress and boil for ten minutes in salted water. Drain it in a colander, chop the vegetables as you would spinach, and turn into a saucepan with an ounce of butter and a little salt.
L. B.—With a little capital, you might make a business for yourself. Procure the latest circulars on emigration from the Bureau, Broadway, Westminster, they will give you all essential information as to cost of passage, &c.
G. A. R.—The climate of Johannesburg is healthy by comparison to ours, but there are other parts of South Africa which stand in higher repute as health resorts; as regards mining, most of the work is done by native labour.

BABBARA.—Borax is the best thing for removing grease spots from silk. Hold the silk over a cup or tumbler, and drop the borax carefully on to the greasy spot; as the borax drops through the silk it dissolves the grease and carries it away.

BEAUTY.—Artists consider that in an approximately perfect figure the total length of the body is seven times the length of the head. The ear and nose are of equal length, and the forehead and the nose are nearly so.

YOUNG MOTHER.—Separate beds should always be provided for children when it is possible by any sacrifice of convenience to do so. Children are restless sleepers and often disturb one another, and it is better in every way that they should sleep apart.

SEEKING COUNSEL.—We fail to see the advantage in abandoning the profession in which you have been trained in order to take up a business which assuredly does not tend to a settled life, and can never be regarded as continuous.

RUKE.—The secret of making good starch is to have the water quite boiling, and to boil the starch over the fire for a few minutes to make it quite clear. The proportion of starch is about a quarter of a pound to two pints of water.

INSURANCE.—A trustee "according to law" is one who is bound to manage the trust affairs with discretion, but cannot be held responsible for any losses that result from his management, provided he has not been either deliberately careless or inexorably rash.

BLUFFJACKET.—It is impossible to say exactly what it will cost to buy off a bluff-jacket; there is a sliding scale in connection with the purchasing of discharge, and the only way to find out the price in each case is to apply to the commanding officer of the ship.

POLAR BEAR.—Canada has a land area of 3,928,320 square miles, and when lakes and rivers are taken in, the Dominion is found to cover 3,500,000 square miles, which is within 1,000 miles of the area of the United States, 3,501,000, including the Indian territory and Alaska.

L'ENVOI.

PURPLE pansy, seek my love's heart! See!
 I against my cheek
 Press thy velvet petals dearly sweet,
 Whilst I whisper, "Speak,
 Speak to him for me."

He is far away where day's reckoned night
 When I call it day;
 And when he hath light, pansy, round my feet
 — Night's lone watchdog lay
 On day-dreams their blight.

Purple as the sea where, while spice winds glide,
 Lovers fervidly
 Bid love's star abide, then will my love greet,
 And his thoughts to me
 Hither thou wilt guide!

Let to him thy face be an imagery
 Of enduring grace
 And fidelity; whilst my heart doth beat,
 Through the hush of space;
 "Speak to him for me!"

TROUBLED SIB.—The better way is to let the disagreement wear itself out, or until such time as the wish to see each other again becomes so strong as to render longer separation impossible. If there is real love between them, such a state of affairs will soon come to pass.

SKOWDOP.—It would have been better had you paid for the article as soon as it had been delivered by the carriers and found satisfactory, then that would have ended the matter. The man's conduct will not excuse you from paying him; the best thing for you to do is to pay your debt and have no further dealings with the man.

FEATHERED.—The best means to adopt for extermination of cockroaches is to get a pennyworth of plaster of Paris and making about half a teaspoonful of it into paste with water at a time, go round with old knife blade as trowel, plastering up all crevices where the insects lurk; at the same time you may strew the floor where they run at night with Keating's insect powder.

M. G.—Under the new Prison Rules it is intended that a person sentenced for a period exceeding six months shall be able to earn by good conduct the remission of "a portion of his imprisonment not exceeding one-fourth of the period remaining after he has served six calendar months." We cannot say whether the provision would apply to the case which you describe.

DOMESTICITY.—Before using a broom take a sweeper and go over the entire carpet lengthwise, and then again crosswise, to take up what dust lies on the surface. With a floor and whisk broom sweep the roughly round the edges of the carpet, and take up the dust thus routed with the carpet sweeper. Finish the remainder of the carpet by sweeping crosswise and taking up the dust with the sweeper every time you work across the room. By this method of sweeping, the dust is gathered into the carpet sweeper instead of being stirred over and over and having a goodly part settle back into the carpet and on the walls, ceiling and wood finish of the room.

BUNLOCKER.—Hair will seldom get in this condition if it is properly looked after, washed regularly once a month, and brushed for ten minutes every night. It is not good for the hair to dip the comb in cold water, as some women do; the hair will have a dull hard look when it dries. Soda should never be put in the water when washing the hair.

OIL-BAG.—1. Ivy leaves mean "Friendship and fidelity," a sprig of ivy with tendrils means "I am assiduous to please." 2. You can still obtain the numbers containing the story you require, including postage; they would cost you 1s. 8d. 3. There are specialities sold that have the effect you desire; but we do not recommend them, as so many contain injurious ingredients, which, though for a time appear efficacious, yet soon entirely destroys the hair.

DONCAR.—To shrink flanne! before making it into garments, and thus to avoid future shrinking is an excellent plan. Before cutting out the garments put the flanne! into clear cold water, and keep it soaking for a fortnight, changing the water every other day. Then wash out the oily matter with warm, soapy water. This is rather a lengthy process, but it will insure the flanne! from shrinking and thickening as it might otherwise do.

LADY'S MAID.—Lace that is too delicate to bear any rubbing is cleaned by shaking it in a large bottle half-full of soda, prepared in the same way as for washing handkerchiefs. Change the water if necessary. Rinse thoroughly, and starch with gum arabic water. Press it very wet on marble, and be sure that every point and figure of the lace is pressed out smoothly. Laces that do not stick on both sides should be pressed with the wrong side next to the marble. When managed in this way, the finest laces can be laundered without injury.

ANOMOUS GOLDFISH.—See that the water in the globes is changed frequently; keep them shaded from bright sunshine and give occasionally a meal of grated raw fish or raw meat or worms; beyond this nothing is necessary; people sometimes in error supply the fish with biscuits; that, however, is not their natural diet at all, and if carried to any extent proves hurtful; the goldfish, which is really a perch, does not boast a very high degree of intelligence, but may be trained to approach the hand that feeds it provided the individual has patience in the training.

PINKIE.—A good way of using up cold meat is to make it into dormers. Mix half pound cold meat (minced), quarter pound breadcrumbs, one tablespoonful of cream or milk, one dessert spoonful of chopped parsley, one teaspoonful of chopped herbs, a pinch of grated lemon rind, a teaspoonful of good gravy, one egg, a pinch of ground rice, and some salt and pepper in a basin. When mixed make up into balls or small round cakes, and fry in boiling fat in a frying-pan. Pour off the fat, sprinkle flour in the pan; add by degrees a little good gravy; boil up and strain round the dish, or dish with gravy poured round.

HOUSEKEEPER.—You can make a salad-dressing without oil. It is made as follows:—Take the yolks of two hard-boiled eggs, one ounce butter (warmed), a teaspoonful of castor sugar, a saltspoonful of dry mustard, the same of salt, two tablespoonfuls of cream, and four of vinegar. Rub the egg smooth, then add the dry ingredients, and having well mixed these, work with the butter, cream, and vinegar (by degrees) to a liquid. This dressing can be served in a flask, and if well corked and shaken will keep any time. Plain salad-dressing can be quickly made by dissolving a good pinch of salt in one tablespoonful of vinegar, adding one teaspoonful of castor sugar and one tablespoonful of oil.

WINTER DISH.—Small teaspoonful butter or fat half tin or one pound tomatoes, two onions, three tablespoonfuls tapoca, two quarts stock, pepper and salt; put into a fat stewpan an ounce of butter or tablespoonful fat hasm out in small pieces; when hot, put in two middle-sized sliced onions, and fry; add tomatoes cut up roughly, let stew for twenty minutes, rub through a sieve or colander, keeping back seeds and pulp of the tomatoes and onions; have two quarts stock made with small piece of mutton, veal, or beef; the very plainest dose for this soup, add the pulp of the tomato, &c., to the stock and set on to boil, then add the tapoca, which has been soaked for an hour, in either warm or cold water and keep stirring till it boils; the soup is ready after boiling ten minutes, and having pepper and salt added; if fresh tomatoes are used, half cupful of water may be put on with them; the onions may be omitted.

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EVERY THUMB TURNED DOWN.

"Wride, I am sorry to say you will never do any more work."

It surely looked like a safe prediction. If you had stood by the doctor's side at the time, enlightened by his knowledge, you would have held his opinion. Other medical men said the same thing. Had you been the patient you would not only have considered yourself booked for the long and last journey, but as virtually on board the train. Even Wride's relations and friends were unable to find a peg to hang a hope on. As in the case of an unpopular gladiator, lying wounded and beaten in a Roman arena, nobody spoke up for him. Every thumb was turned down. If Luke Wride lived and got well under the circumstances he would do so in the very face and eyes of all whose judgment was worth a rusty sixpence. Yet see! On December 1st, 1897, about four years after the date of his death sentence, this very man writes a letter in which he says, "*I am now in the best of health and can walk twenty miles a day in my business.*"

Here is a fact which calls for an explanation. It shows that *vox populi* is not always *vox Dei*, and weakens one's faith in majorities.

"In the spring of 1887," says Mr. Wride, "my health began to fail. I felt dull, heavy, and tired, having lost my usual energy and life. I had a bad taste in the mouth, my appetite was poor, and I was constantly retching. After meals I had an awful pain and weight at the chest. I soon became weak and emaciated. Often when I had got half way to my work I felt so weak I was obliged to turn back. For two years I struggled on and was then compelled to give up work altogether. I could hardly sleep or rest, and was in pain after every morsel I ate. I suffered so badly from palpitation of the heart I thought I should die."

"My breathing soon came to be so difficult I had to be propped up with pillows. Dropsy next set in, and my legs, feet and body were so much swollen that I had to have my clothing let out. I was unable to wash or dress myself and had to be assisted to bed. For three years I passed most of my time in bed, and for over five years could only crawl across the room. As month after month passed I only grew more feeble and never expected to be better in this world. I was so wretched and miserable I often wished myself dead. All my relatives and friends thought I was in a consumption and doomed to die. I had one doctor after another who gave me medicines and cod liver oil, but I was none the better. I went to the Bristol Infirmary as an in-patient,

where I was attended by several doctors, but after six weeks' treatment was discharged as incurable. I then attended the Guinea Street Hospital, where they gave me medicine without good result. All the doctors said there was no hope for me, and a physician from Bedminster, who visited me, said, '*Wride, I am sorry to say you will never do any more work.*'"

"In a half dead, half alive state I continued until May, 1894, when my brother-in-law, Mr. Ford, of Clutton, visited me, and recommended me to take Mother Seigel's Syrup. I had no faith in that or in anything else, but to please him I got a bottle from Messrs. Hodder's Stores and began taking it. In a few days I found great relief, which gave me some confidence in it. I continued taking it and soon I could eat well, the food causing no pain. I now gained strength slowly but surely, and never looked behind me. Of course my final recovery was gradual, as I was a complete wreck. In the course of a little time the dropsical condition left me and I have had no return of it since. I grew stronger and stronger daily and was able again to get about after eight years' illness."

"*I am now in the best of health and can walk twenty miles a day in my business as traveller. I can eat anything and know nothing of the weakness that afflicted me for so many years. All my friends and neighbours wonder at my recovery. I tell them that Mother Seigel's Syrup alone has cured me, and but for it I am sure I should now be in my grave. You are at liberty to publish this statement as you like, and refer anyone to me. I will gladly answer inquiries.*"—(Signed) LUKE WRIDE, 2, Bristol Place, Bryant's Hill, St. George, Bristol, Dec. 1st, 1897.

Mr. Wride has resided in his present house fifteen years and is well known and highly respected in the district. His disease was of the digestive organs, progressing until the liver, the kidneys, the heart, the lungs, and practically the whole system was involved. Inasmuch as the dropsy, caused by kidney failure, is commonly one of the last and fatal symptoms in such cases, the doctors were fully justified in pronouncing this case incurable. And under the ordinary treatment no doubt it would have proved so; but in this, as in so many like instances, Mother Seigel's Syrup showed that it possesses curative properties not shared by any other remedies. Hence the (fortunate) mistake of the doctors and the happy recovery of their patient.



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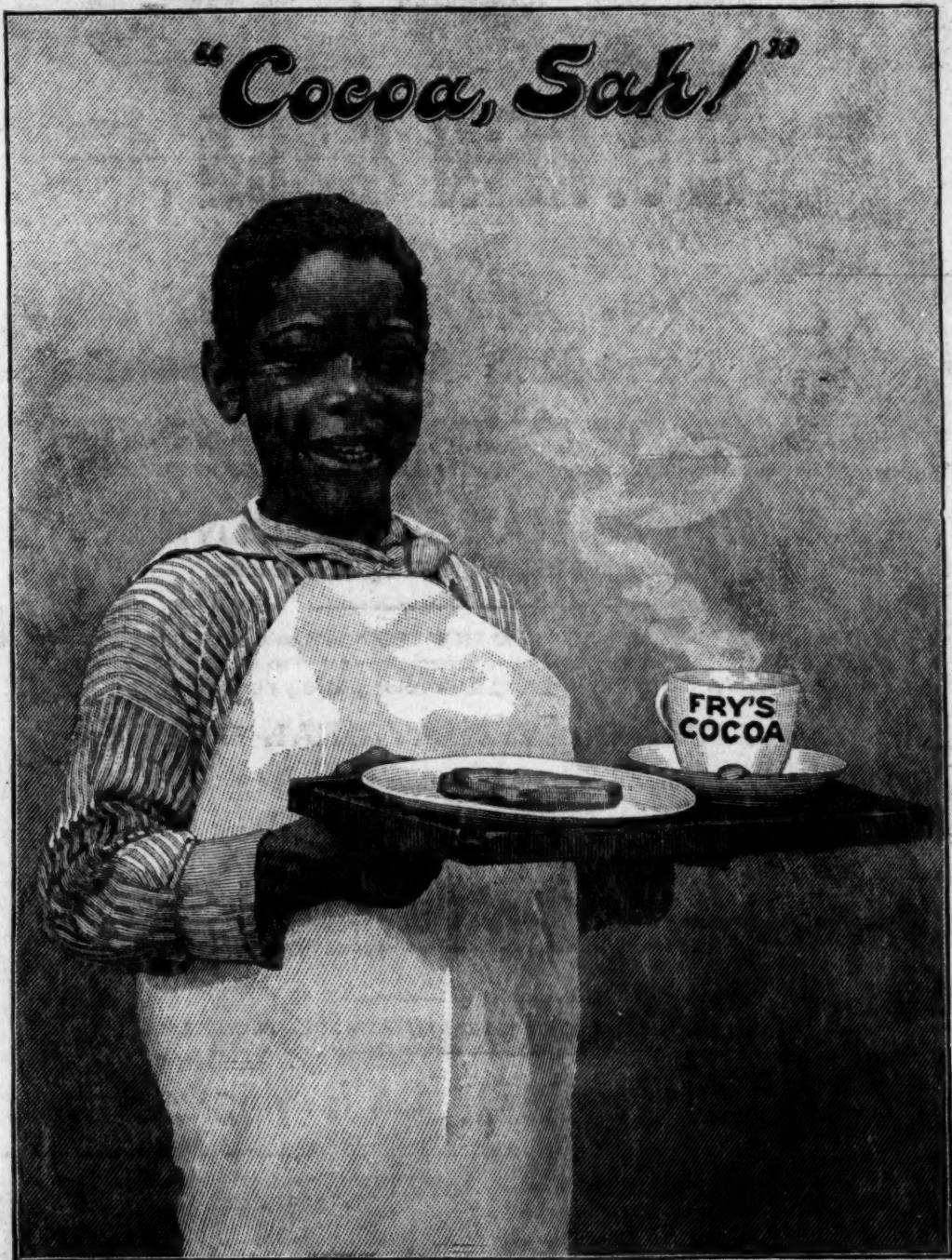
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PART 459. VOL. LXXIII.—JULY, 1899.

CONTENTS.

NOVELETTES.

	PAGE
SIR LYNN'S LITTLE MAYBUD	122
A MAN'S REDEMPTION	145
A TANGLED WEB	174
TRUE GOLD	193

SERIAL STORIES.

MY SWANTHART	129, 152, 185, 210
FOUND WANTING	139, 162
NAMBLESS	138, 157
REDEEMED BY FATE	169, 205
HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES	181, 201

SHORT STORIES.

	PAGE
REUNITED	136
SAVED	138
A TORN LETTER: AND WHAT CAME OF IT	161
GEORGE BLESSIT'S PERIL	172
OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH	184

VARIETIES.

POETRY	143, 167, 174, 191
FACTS	141, 165, 189, 214
SOCIETY	142, 166, 190, 214
STATISTICS	142, 166, 190, 214
GEMS	142, 166, 190, 214
HOUSEHOLD TREASURES	142, 166, 190, 214
MISCELLANEOUS	142, 166, 190, 214
NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS	143, 167, 191, 215

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